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Pr

Practical Discourses
UPON THE
PARABLES
OF OUR
Blessed Saviour.
WITH
Prayers annex'd to each Discourse.

VOL. II.

BY
FRANCIS BRAGGE, B. D.
Vicar of *Hitchin*, and Prebendary
of *Lincoln*.

The Second Edition.

L O N D O N:

Printed for Sam. Manship near the Royal Exchange,
and Will. Innys in St. Paul's Church-Yard,
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Practical Discourses

UPON THE

PARABLES



Prayers annexed to each Discourse.

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BY

FRANCIS BRADGATE, B.D.

Rector of St. Paul's Church, London.

Second Edition.

LONDON:

Printed for sale at the Royal Exchange, and 15, Abchurch Lane, St. Paul's Church Yard, LONDON.

TO THE
Most Reverend Father in GOD,

THOMAS

Lord Arch-Bishop of *Canterbury*,
His GRACE.

This Second VOLUME
OF
PRACTICAL DISCOURSES
UPON OUR
Blessed Saviour's Parables

IS
Dedicated and Presented,
WITH THE
Same Veneration as was the First,

By His GRACE's

most Humble,

and Dutiful Servant,

FR. BRAGGE.

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and

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TO THE
READER.

When I published the First Volume of these Discourses, being uncertain what Reception it might meet with in the World, and therefore unwilling to make it of too great a Bulk and Price; I chose to handle those Parables only which were generally look'd upon as the most Remarkable, and might be improv'd in the most easy and familiar way, to the pious Reader's Advantage.

But, succeeding so well, thro' God's Blessing, in my first Attempt,

To the READER.

tempt, I of late resolv'd to go on; and apply'd my self to consider those Parables which I then pass'd by: And which, upon a more close Inspection I found (even some that at first View seem'd very little to concern us now) to be equally useful with the rest; and have endeavour'd to make them so in my Comments upon them.

I shall say no more here, but that, if what I now offer to your Perusal shall do you any good, I shall think my self very happy; and let you and I return all the Praise unto God.

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PRA-

Practical Discourses
 UPON THE
PARABLES
 OF OUR
Blessed Saviour ;
 With PRAYERS annexed to each
 DISCOURSE.

VOL. II.



PARABLE I.
*Of the Grain of Mustard-Seed, and
 Leaven.*

Matth. xiii. 31, 32, 33.

*Another Parable put he forth unto them,
 saying, The Kingdom of Heaven is like
 to a Grain of Mustard-Seed, which a
 Man took and sow'd in his Field :*

*Which indeed is the least of all Seeds; but
 when it is grown is the greatest among
 Herbs, and becometh a Tree; so that the*

B

Birds

Birds of the Air come and lodge in the Branches thereof.

Another Parable spake he unto them, The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto Leaven, which a Woman took and hid in three Measures of Meal, till the whole was leavened.

see Vol. I.

OUR Lord having, in the foregoing Parables of the Sower and the Tares, shewn upon how many the good Word of God that he preach'd, would be lost, and become unfruitful; and that, under the Pretence and Name of *Christians*, there would be very ill Men intermingled among the good in all Ages of the Church; both which would be a great Hindrance to the spreading of the Gospel: Left his Disciples should be discourag'd thereby from following him, his *Apostles* especially, who were to be employ'd in the Propagating of it throughout the World; he spoke the above-recited Parables. The Design of which is to shew, That how small and unpromising soever the Beginnings of the Gospel were; how mean the Author of it, (as to all outward Appearance) in his Person, and his Way of Life; and how worse than mean in the Circumstances of his Death; how unlikely its Doctrines were

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were to be embrac'd by both Jews and Gentiles; and how very uncomfortable and disheartning some of them; and all in Hopes of an unseen Reward in a future World; and withal, that the Planters of it, after his Decease, were to be a few poor illiterate Fishermen, who were to contend with all the Wit, and Force, and Malice of the World, and conquer Difficulties to all appearance insuperable: That notwithstanding all this, this *little Grain of Mustard-Seed*, which look'd so contemptibly, as if 'twere good for, and would come to nothing; should, by the peculiar Blessing and Almighty Power of God, who only gives the Increase, grow up apace, and flourish (as that Plant did in those Countries) till it became a Tree, and that large enough to overshadow the whole Earth. And tho' like a little Piece of *Leaven*, or four Dough, (as the other Parable represents it) the Gospel appeared very indifferently at first, and of a very unpleasing Relish to Mens vitiated Palates; yet, by the same Divine Assistance and Blessing, it should be so quick and powerful, as in time to insinuate it self thro' the whole Mass of Mankind, all People and Nations, and all Degrees of Men from the highest to the lowest, and season their Minds with its heavenly Doctrines, and

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reform their Lives, and spread its admirable Influence even to the remotest and darkeſt Corners of the World.

To aſſure his Diſciples and Apoſtles of this, was the Deſign of theſe Parables: And 'twas but needful they ſhould have ſuch Encouragement: And they liv'd to ſee it, in a great meaſure, made good; the Chriſtian Religion making ſo wonderful a Progreſs, even in the Life-time of the Apoſtles, againſt the fierceſt Oppoſition that could be made to it both by Jews and Heathens, that it was to the Amazement of every Body. And how mightily it hath proſper'd ſince their Deceafe, is evident to all Men: And we Hope and Pray that it may do ſo more and more, till the Conſummation of all things!

In diſcourſing therefore upon theſe Parables, (which, being of the ſame Signification, we'll conſider together) I ſhall not recount the particular Steps and Advances the Kingdom of God made in the World, by the Preaching of the Goſpel of our Saviour, till it came to the height it now is at; for that would be to write the *History of the Progreſs of Chriſtianity*, which, tho' it would be of excellent Uſe, yet is out of the Way of my preſent Deſign: But I ſhall endeavour to ſhew by what *Means* it was, that the Apoſtles,
and

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and some of the first Believers, were enabled to go so far as they did in so great and difficult a Work, as the Planting a new Religion in the World of such a Nature as the Christian is; and how it came in so short a time as fifty or sixty Years after the Death of Christ (for 'twas but little more from thence to the Death of Saint *John*, who liv'd a great while longer than any of the rest of the Apostles) to spread so far and wide as it did, under Persecution and Oppression, and all the Ways that could be invented utterly to destroy and root it out.

Now our Blessed Lord, when he had sufficiently confirmed the Truth of his Doctrine and Mission, as the Messias, by many unquestionable Miracles, which, as *Nicodemus*, one of the Jewish Rulers, was forc'd to confess were so great, that no Man could perform them unless *God were with him*; after a *John 3. 2.* short Stay in the World from the time of his publick Appearance in it, (not much above three Years,) was content to be betray'd into the Hands of wicked Men, and as the Representative of Sinners, used with the utmost Scorn and Cruelty, and at last made a publick Victim for the sinful World, upon the Altar of his Cross; where he expired in Torment for our sakes, and finish'd the

great good Work he came into the World to do. But 'twas not long before he appear'd again alive to his sad Disciples, (as when he told them of his Sufferings he assur'd them he would, which gave them the greatest Reason to depend upon the Completion of all his other Promises) and after he had conversed with them for a considerable time, and clear'd their Minds of all Doubts, and Fears, and Scruples, and open'd his Apostles Understandings that they might have a thorough Knowledge of the Scriptures, those especially that related to the Coming of the Messias, and were fulfill'd in *Him*; and had given them Charge of prosecuting the great Affair of the Gospel with all possible Fidelity and Diligence, promising them, and all that should succeed them, his Presence and

Matth. 28.

— 19. 20.

Acts 1. 4.

8, 9.

Assistance in so doing *even unto the end of the World*; and renewed his Promise of giving them sufficient Power to be *Witnesses to him unto the uttermost parts of the Earth*, after the Descent of the Holy Ghost upon them, which he commanded them not to depart from *Jerusalem* till they had received: He blessed them, and ascended in Triumph up to Heaven; and in a few Days after, when they were met together on the Day of *Pentecost* to worship

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worship him, and in devout Expectation of the Heavenly Gift, *suddenly there came a Sound from Heaven* Acts 2. 2. *as of a rushing mighty Wind, and it filled all the House where they were sitting; and there appeared unto them Cloven Tongues like as of Fire, and sate upon each of them; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost:* That is, Extraordinary Gifts of the Blessed Spirit of God were then plentifully pour'd down upon them, in order to their effectual Discharge of their great and weighty Employment, the Propagation of the Gospel of Christ throughout the World.

Thus were the Apostles *endow'd* by their Divine Master, *with power from on high*, to accomplish that Work, which far exceeded all meer Human Ability: And what those Gifts and Powers were, by Means of which they had such wonderful Success as from such small and seemingly inconsiderable Beginnings, and in so short a time to convert so great a part of the World to the Faith of a crucified Saviour, we shall now make it our Business to shew.

Now those extraordinary Gifts and Powers were of two sorts, *External* and *Internal*; the *External* were these that follow :

First, *The Gift of Tongues.*

Secondly, *A Power of miraculously Healing Diseases, &c.*

Thirdly, *A Power of inflicting them.*

Fourthly, *A Power of Enabling other Believers, in some Instances, to do the like by the Imposition of their Hands.*

The *Internal Gifts* were such as these, First, *A Faculty of Discerning Spirits.*

Secondly, *A Perfect Knowledge of the Scriptures.*

Thirdly, *Extraordinary Prudence and Conduct.*

Fourthly, *Undaunted Boldness, Constancy, and Courage.*

Each of which we shall consider in their Order, and shew how necessary such Gifts and Powers were to the first Planters of the Gospel, and how mightily it prevailed by reason of them. And,

First, The Apostles were endow'd with the *Gift of Tongues*, or a Habit of speaking perfectly all Languages, as there was Occasion, without any previous Study or Instruction.

Thus, *Acts 2. 4.* 'tis said, *They began to speak with other Tongues as the Spirit gave them Utterance; and Ver. 6, &c.* the Multitude of Jews and Profelytes, that then were come from all Parts to Jerusalem to Worship, *Parthians, Medes, and Elamites*, and several other Nations, *heard them*

them speak, as by turns they discours'd to them, every Man in his own Tongue in which he was born, the wonderful Works of God. And they were all amaz'd, and wonder'd (as well they might) to hear a Company of ignorant Galileans speak to them in their own particular Dialect, with as much Readiness and Propriety as they themselves could do.

Some were so ridiculously malicious as to say they were *full of new Wine*, and that Drunkenness, the usual Cause of Mens not being able for a time to speak well and articulately their own *Mother Tongue*, made them so full of other strange Languages which perhaps they never so much as heard of before. But none that were not drunk with Rage and Prejudice, would ever have made such an Objection as this: And St. Peter's Discourse at that very time, which was so efficacious as to convert *Three*

thousand Souls, was a Demon-
stration that what he said was
the Words of Truth and Soberness, and that the Inspiration of the Spirit of God, and not Excess of Wine, was the Cause of that Prodigy which they then saw and heard.

—33.

And a Prodigy it was, so great, that no Power less than that of God could effect it; a thing so evidently miraculous, that

that there is no Room for any rational Doubt, or Exception against it. That a few illiterate *Fishermen*, whose Time was wholly spent near the Banks of a small inconsiderable Lake in *Galilee*, and in all probability had never seen any Country but their own; and their Thoughts taken up with little else than Catching and Selling of Fish, and Mending their Nets, and whose mean Condition, and as mean natural Parts, render'd it impossible for them to acquire those Languages by the usual Methods of Study and Instruction: That such Men as these should all on the sudden be able to discourse fluently in any Language, as if they had been Natives of every Country in the World, and should continue to do so as long as they liv'd, (as no doubt but they did) nay, and have Power to enable others to do the like, as we shall see they had by and by; this is so quite out of the Course and Power of Nature, that 'tis as reasonable to imagine, that second Causes may so concur as to make a Brute become Rational, as that they could effect this Miracle. And if any one should suspect a Diabolical Delusion in this Matter; too many were Witnesses of it to be so imposed upon, and the Thing was too *Lasting*, and the Effects of it such as demonstrated it to be a great Reality.

Now

Now as for the Necessity at that time of this miraculous Gift, 'tis plain that since the Religion of *Jesus* was not to be confin'd to those narrow Bounds that the old Law was, but to be Preach'd to all Nations, and the Sound of it to reach to the Worlds End, 'twas necessary that the first Propagators of it should be furnish'd with the free Use and Command of the several Languages of those Places they were instructed in it; and the Apostles that were set apart for this great Work being all Jews, and all (except *St. Paul*, who was made of the Number in an extraordinary manner afterwards) unlearned, and the usual way of acquiring Languages so very tedious, that it would be to the great Hindrance of the Progress of the Gospel; 'Twas needful that the Spirit of God should make up this Defect, by immediately infusing into them the Habit of speaking any Language whatsoever, wherever they should come, that so they might proclaim the glad Tidings of the Gospel, without any such Letts and Delays, as otherwise would have been unavoidable.

Secondly, They had Power given them of miraculously *Healing Diseases*, by a Word or a Touch, without making use of any outward Applications; and of *Casting out Devils*; and even of *Raising*
the

the Dead: According to that of our Lord to them after his Resurrection, *Mark* 16. 17. *These Signs shall follow them that believe; in my Name shall they cast out Devils, and shall lay Hands on the Sick, and they shall recover*: And *John* 14. 12. *He that believeth in me, the Works that I do shall he do also; and greater Works than these shall he do, because I go to the Father*: And *Acts* 2. 43. 'tis said, *Many Wonders and Signs were done by the Apostles*; several of which are recorded in that Book: And 'twas but needful that they should have such a Power as this.

For the World was then, and had been for a long time, fix'd in quite different ways of Worship to what the Christian Religion taught; the Jews in their way, and the Heathens in theirs; and to which they were so wedded, that nothing could be more difficult than to bring them off. And therefore 'twas not enough that the Apostles should barely preach up the Excellency of their Master's Religion above all others, and quote Prophecies of old to prove him to be the Saviour of the World, and promise infinite Rewards in Heaven to such as should comply with the Gospel, and threaten high to the obstinate Refusers of it; for this any bold Sectary might do, and no *more* than this would have prevailed but little.

The

The *Gentiles* would hardly have been brought to part with the Religion of their Fathers, grown natural to them by long Use and Custom, set off with great Pomp and Splendour, applauded by the most eloquent Men in the World, and, as they thought, not destitute of Approbations supernatural and divine; and that for a Novelty never heard of before, recommended only by a few poor ignorant Mechanics, and those too of a Nation which they hated and despis'd; and which taught such strange impracticable Doctrines as *Self-denial, taking up the Cross, hating the World*, and the like; and all this only in prospect of a *future spiritual Reward*; and that not to be enjoy'd neither till after Death. Barely to perswade a Heathen by *Discourse* to change his Religion for such a one as this, at first sight, would appear to him to be, would in all probability have caus'd Derision and Mockery rather than Conversion.

And less likely would it have been in *this* manner to prevail upon the *Jews*; who, as they were naturally the most obstinate unteachable People in the World, so they were of all others the most tenacious of their own Religion, and had great Reason to be so; being assured by many unquestionable Miracles that it was from God, and having smarted so often,
and

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and so severely formerly for their being
unfaithful to it.

And accordingly we find them demand-
ing a *Sign* even of our Lord himself, tho'
they could not but be sensible that he
spake so as never Man spake. And tho' he
refus'd at that time to satisfy the Pharisees
impious Curiosity, yet at other times he
wrought a great many stupendious Mi-
racles, and appeals to them as

Joh. 10. 38.

— *14. 11.*

the Proof of his being the
Christ; and says plainly, *John*

*15. 24. If I had not done among them the
Works that none other Man did, they had
not had Sin.*

Wherefore 'twas absolutely necessary
that this Religion which the World was
so obstinately bent against, *to the Jews a
Stumbling-block, and to the Gentiles Foolish-
ness*, which had so little of the *World* in
it to recommend it, and was to be plan-
ted by such outwardly poor and con-
temptible Instruments; should be proved
to be *Divine* by some extraordinary Evi-
dence from Heaven: that so, however
mean and unpromising its Outside might
be, Men might be convinc'd

*1 Cor. 1. 24. that it was indeed the Power
and the Wisdom of God.*

Thirdly, As the Apostles had Power
given them to *heal* Diseases. and *rescue*
from Death, so had they likewise to *inflict*
both

both as they saw Occasion, and the Edification of the Church required.

Thus *Ananias* and *Sapphira* were *Acts* 5. 1. struck Dead by the Word of *St. Peter*, for keeping back part of the Price of the Land they sold for the Use and Service of the Church, (which then had no other Revenue but the Contributions of Believers) and affirming to the Apostles that it was the whole. And *St. Paul* struck *Elymas* Blind, for withstanding him and *Barnabas* when they endeavour'd to plant the Gospel in *Cyprus*, and for seeking to turn away the Deputy from the Faith, who shew'd himself very inclinable to embrace it; for so we read, *Acts* 13. 10, &c. that upon *St. Paul's* telling the Sorcerer, that because he would *not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord he should be blind, not seeing the Sun for a Season; there immediately fell on him a Mist and a Darknes*, and he went about seeking some to lead him by the Hand: which so astonish'd the Governour, that when he saw what was done, he believed.

Of this kind is that Delivering over to *Satan* mention'd *1 Cor.* 5. 5. and *1 Tim.* 1. 20. for the Destruction of the Flesh; that is, that Diseases might be inflicted by evil Spirits upon great and notorious Offenders, (who upon such Church Censures were permitted by God to do it)

that

that the Spirit might be saved in the Day of the Lord Jesus. And that is a famous In-

stance of it mention'd by *Ar-*
Lib. 2. con- *nobius*, who reports, that when
tra Gent.

Simon Magus, the Ringleader of the *Gnosticks*, contended with *St. Peter* at *Rome*, and by his Lying Wonders endeavoured to perswade the People, he was *God*, and *the Great Power of God*, and the like, and had for a long time bewitch'd them with his Sorceries and Enchantments, as he had formerly done those of *Samaria*, *Acts* 8. 11. and in the Presence of *St. Peter*, attempted from a high Tower to soar aloft in the Air and fly up into Heaven; at the Prayer of *St. Peter*, and the mention of the Name of Christ, the miserable Wretch fell headlong to the Ground, and in Shame and Torment dy'd of the Fall soon after.

Now, that such a Power as this was necessary in those first Times of the Church, will be evident if we consider, that the Apostles being Men of a low Condition, as to the World, and not at all assisted by the Civil Power, but violently opposed by it, and themselves often ignominiously treated, and suffering as Malefactors; That *Order*, and *Government*, which is necessary to the well-being of all Societies, could not have been preserv'd among such vast Numbers as
in

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in a very little time believed in Christ, unless their Want of Temporal Power had been supply'd with something spiritual that was analogous to it, and might be as effectual to create a great Awe and Regard of the Apostles in the People. Now nothing could be more conducive to this, than their being able to punish Offenders as severely by a Word speaking as the Jewish and Roman Governours could do by the Hands of their Lictors and Executioners. And accordingly we read, that when *Ananias* and *Sapphira* were on the sudden struck dead by the Word of St. Peter, *Great Fear* *Acts 5. 11.*
came upon all the Church.

The *last* of the *External* extraordinary Gifts confer'd upon the Apostles, that we find mention'd in Scripture, was a Power they had of endowing other Believers, in some Instances, with the like Gifts of the Spirit, by their *Prayers* and *the Imposition of their Hands.*

Thus, when many of *Samaria* believed at the Preaching and Miracles of *Philip* the Deacon, *Peter* and *John* came down and pray'd and lay'd their Hands on them, and they receiv'd the Holy Ghost. And St. Paul laid his Hands on twelve Believers at *Ephesus*, and the Holy Ghost came upon them, and they spoke with
Tongues and prophesied. —19. 5.

C

Now

Now this was necessary, not only to cause a profound Awe and Reverence of the Apostles in the Minds of the Disciples, which it certainly would do; but for a greater Reason. For, there being Converts made to Christianity in divers Places where there was no such extraordinary Descent of the Holy Ghost upon Believers, as in particular at *Samaria*, *Acts* 8. 16. nay where some had not so much as heard whether there was any Holy Ghost, as those Christians at *Ephesus*, *Acts* 19. 2. 'twas necessary for the Establishment of a Church in such Places, that the Apostles should have a Power of conferring such Gifts upon some select Persons among them, as were then requisite for that purpose, and the spreading the Gospel still farther in the neighbouring Countries: That is, such as themselves had been endow'd with for the same End, *viz.* the *Gift of Tongues*, and of *working Miracles*, and the like.

And upon this Account it was, that the Wisdom of God thought fit to fill divers *Others* with the Holy Ghost, in those first Days of the Church, besides those upon whom the Apostles laid their Hands.

Thus we read *Acts* 4. 31. That upon a devout Prayer of the Believers, occasion'd by the Imprisonment and rough Treatment

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ment of *Peter* and *John* by the Jewish
Sanhedrim, *the Place where they were assem-*
bled was shaken, and they were all filled with
the Holy Ghost. And in like manner the
Holy Ghost fell on *Cornelius*, a Gentile,
and those with him, as on the Apostles
at the Beginning; and *they spake*
with Tongues and magnified God, *Act. 10. 46.*
and upon that were received into the
Church by Baptism.

But then, there was this Difference
between the Inspiration of the Apostles
and other Believers; *viz.* The Apostles
had *each* of them *all* those miraculous
Powers and Gifts which were divided to
other Believers severally, according to
the Good-pleasure of the Holy Spirit. To
one was given a miraculous *Faith*, or such
a *Faith* as would enable him to work all
sorts of Miracles; to another *the Gift of*
Healing; to another *Divers kinds of*
Tongues, &c. as *St. Paul* assures us, *1 Cor.*
12. 9, &c. But all were not endu'd with
every one of these Gifts, as the Apostles
were; who being plac'd in the highest
Station, and appointed by Christ to be
the chief Managers of the great Work of
Planting the Gospel, 'twas but fitting
that they should be distinguish'd from
all others by greater Variety of these su-
pernatural Gifts, and a Power of confer-
ring them upon others as they saw Oc-
casion.

But besides these extraordinary *External* Powers and Gifts, the Holy Ghost fill'd them with divers as extraordinary *Internal* ones; as,

First, A Faculty of *Discerning Spirits*, 1 Cor. 12. 10; that is, a Participation in some degree of that God-like Power of looking into Mens Hearts, and knowing whether they were sincere or no in what they pretended to.

Thus when *Simon Magus* made Profession of his believing in Christ, and was thereupon baptiz'd, and then offer'd Money to *Peter* and *John* that he might have the same Power he saw them have, of giving the Holy Ghost to whom he would, by the Imposition of his Hands; *Peter* rebuk'd him, and said, *Thy Money perish with thee; For Thy Heart is not right in the Sight of God; I perceive thy vile Purpose in making this Offer,* Acts 8. 23. *and That thou art in the Gall of Bitterness, and in the Bond of Iniquity.* And in the Case of *Ananias* and *Sapphira* he presently discern'd their fraudulent Intention in detaining Part of the Price of what they sold for the Churches Service, and making as if it was the whole.

Now this wonderful Gift, as 'twas a great Motive to Sincerity in such as had already embraced the Faith, and their

conti-

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continuing uncorrupt in their holy Profession, and Performance of all the Duties of it in singleness of Heart, and purity of Intention, (which is a thing of no mean Consideration) since if they did not, they knew the Apostles would soon find them out; so it was highly needful, in order to the Detection of false Pretenders to it, Impostors, and hypocritical Deluders of the Brethren under a specious shew of Holiness, and pretence to miraculous Powers; and for the more effectual Exercise of Ecclesiastical Discipline upon such as most deserv'd it; and was a great Security to the Infant Church from the unspeakable Damage of admitting Wolves in Sheeps Cloathing into any Place of Trust, or Share in her Government, or the Ministry of holy Things.

What infinite Mischief would such a one as *Simon Magus* have done had he been receiv'd (as he desired) into any sacred Office in the Church? What Slaughter would he have made of the Flock? Bringing in damnable Heresies, backing them with Signs and lying Wonders, appearing all the while as one divinely inspir'd, and like an Angel of Light, who was indeed one of the worst Emissaries of the Spirits of Darknes! We know how that Man of Sin prevail'd to the Ruin of innumerable Souls, and

the great Disturbance of the Church, even after the Apostles had found out what he was, and publicly rebuk'd and rejected him: What then would he not have done had he been shrowded under a fair Disguise, and pass'd without Discovery! To prevent this Danger, which might have prov'd almost fatal to a rising Church, 'twas necessary the Holy Apostles should be endow'd in some measure with that truly *Divine* Power of searching the very Secrets of the Heart. As they were

Secondly, With the deepest clearest Knowledge in the Mysteries of the Gospel, and an Ability of *Interpreting Prophecies* and other obscure Places of Scripture, those especially that had any Relation to the Messiah.

This is call'd, 1 Cor. 12. 8. *The Word of Knowledge*, and Chap. 13. 2. *The Gift of Prophecy*; and 'tis what our Lord promised them a little before he left the World, Joh. 14. 16. namely, that the Holy Ghost should *Teach them all things, and bring all things to their Remembrance whatsoever he had said unto them.* And John 16. 13. the Holy Ghost is call'd *The Spirit of Truth*, and him that should *Guide them into all Truth.*

Thus we find St. Peter, who before was so ignorant in the Secrets of the Gospel, and so slow of Apprehension when
our

our Lord discours'd of the great things of his Kingdom, (as is evident from several Passages in the Evangelists,) that the meek Jesus gave him this sharp Rebuke, *Get thee behind me Satan, for thou savourest not the things that be of God*; We find this backward Scholar, immediately upon the Descent of the Holy Ghost, become able to instruct the whole World in the deepest Points of Faith; to bring Light to dark Prophecies, and demonstrate from them that God had made the Crucified Jesus both Lord and Christ: As we may see in that Discourse of his, *Acts 2.* and elsewhere in divers places.

Now 'twas absolutely necessary that the Minds of the Apostles should be thus greatly *Enlightned*, and thoroughly Instructed in every Part of the Mystery of Godliness, and endow'd with a full and clear Understanding of the Scriptures; because what they writ and taught was to be the standing Doctrine of the Christian Religion for ever; and any Ignorance or Mistakes in them, would have entailed Error and Imperfection upon all future Ages: which to have suffer'd in the first Preachers of the Gospel, would not have been consistent with the Wisdom and Goodness of our great Lawgiver.

Besides, they were to encounter with all the Learning of the Jewish Nation;

they were to dispute with the Doctors of their Law, the Scribes and Pharisees, Men obstinately resolv'd against Christianity, and cunning to oppose it. They were to convince these Men out of their own Scriptures, that *Jesus* was the *Christ*, which could not be done to any Purpose without their thorough Understanding of them, and great Readiness in solving Difficulties, and confounding whatever Objections should be raised from them. For, but any one thing *weakly* urg'd and maintain'd, would presently have been catch'd at, and made an Argument of the Falsity of the whole; and any the least Ground gain'd upon the Apostles would immediately have been cry'd up as a total Rout: And therefore 'twas but needful that their *Speech and Preaching* should be in *Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power*.

Thirdly, They were endowed with the greatest *Prudence and Conduct* in the Management of this great Affair, and enabled to give unpremeditated and convictive Answers to such of the Heathen and Jewish Governours, as should question and oppose them; according to that of our Lord, *Luke 21. 12. Ye shall be brought before Kings and Rulers for my Names sake; but settle it in your Minds not to premeditate what ye shall answer, for I will*
give

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give you a Mouth and Wisdom, which all
your Adversaries shall not be able to gainsay
or resist: For, as 'tis Matt. 10. 20. It is
not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your
Father that speaketh in you. And John
16. 13. he tells his Apostles, that the Spi-
rit should shew them things to come; that
is, not only enable them to foresee and
foretell, but be their Director and Guide
in the future Exigencies of the Church.

Now the Necessity of their having
such extraordinary Prudence and Con-
duct is evident in that they were to break
down the Wall of Partition between
Jews and Gentiles, and enclose them in
one Fold, and unite them in one Religi-
on, under the Discipline and Government
of Jesus Christ. Now, who that consi-
ders what inveterate Hatred there was
on both sides one against the other, and
how they both join'd in Hating and Op-
posing Christianity, but must think it a
thing of the greatest Difficulty, and that
required the Wisdom and Conduct of an
Angel, nay of God himself, so effectually
to accommodate Matters between them,
as to make them of one Heart, and of
one Mind, and to love as Brethren, to
be of one Faith, submit to one Baptism,
and acknowledge one and the same great
Lord, even him who not long before suf-
fer'd as a Malefactor upon a Cross without
the Gates of Jerusalem. And

And as for their wonderful Quickness in returning such Answers as should stop the Mouths of their Heathen as well as Jewish Opposers, without the least Hesitancy, and perfectly *ex tempore*, without any Preparation before-hand: Considering how they were to be set upon, unlearned as they were, by all the Grecian and Roman Wits, and pump'd and sifted, and asked ensnaring Questions by the Disputers of this World, as St. Paul calls them, and their subtle Oppositions of Philosophy and Science; they had need of a divine Prompter to furnish them with prudent and unexceptionable Answers, since one Baffle or Nonplus on the Apostles side would have been of unspeakable ill Consequence at that time, and a Shock scarce ever to be recover'd.

In the *last* place, The Apostles were endow'd with undaunted *Boldness*, *Constancy*, and *Courage*, in the Discharge of their sacred Ministry. For so we read of St. Peter and St. John, who in our Lord's Life-time were so extreamly timorous, that one of them, tho' his Bosom Favourite, left him in his greatest Necessity, and with great Consternation fled when Judas had betray'd him, and the Soldiers seiz'd on him; and the other, three times, with horrid Oaths and Imprecations, deny'd that ever he knew him:

him: We read of these once basely faint-hearted Disciples, that after they were endow'd with Power from on High, nothing could affright them, or discourage them from promoting the Interest of the Gospel.

How undauntedly did they answer the Jewish *Sanhedrim*, or chief Council, when they question'd them about healing the impotent Man, *Acts* 4. so that their Enemies could not but wonder at them! How constantly did they persist against all Opposition, even to the last Extremity! the one being crucify'd for the Name and Testimony of Jesus, the other thrown into a Caldron of boiling Oyl, and being miraculously preserved from perishing in that Torment, afterwards, for the same blessed Cause, ended his Days in Banishment. And as these, so the rest of the Apostles, after constant Preaching the Religion of their great Master, with great Pains and Diligence, up and down the World, zealously exhorting all Men to embrace it, to the evident Hazard and Loss of all that could be dear to them here below; at last seal'd the Truth of their Doctrine with their Blood. *They had tryal of cruel Mockings and Scourgings, of Bonds and Imprisonments, they were ston'd, sawn in sunder, slain with the Sword, destitute, afflicted,*

Hebr. II.

*flitted, tormented, and to all outward Appearance were of all Men the most miserable; but yet bore all with the noblest and unshaken Constancy and Courage. The heroick Bravery of St. Paul is particularly remarkable, and the latter half of the Acts is almost wholly taken up in recounting it; and himself has given us an Epitome of his Sufferings, 2 Cor. 11. 23, &c. and at last he suffered Martyrdom under Nero, by the Sword. Now, how necessary extraordinary Assistance and Support from above was to carry them through such severe Tryals as these; is evident at first sight; they being more than enough to sink, the greatest natural Courage, that was not kept up by divine Comforts and Refreshments. And should these *Champions* of the Christian Cause have failed, what the Fate of their Followers would have been, is easy to imagine. Wherefore God upheld them with his almighty Arm, and with his right Hand he strengthened them.*

And as these extraordinary Effusions of the blessed Spirit were in those early Times necessary for the *Apostles*; so was it likewise necessary that divers *other* Believers should *then* partake of them also.

For the Number of the *Apostles* being so small that they could not possibly in their own Persons preach the Gospel in

in every place, nor be long resident where they had preach'd it, new Conversions still requiring their Presence to confirm and settle Matters of Government, and the like; and it being thereupon necessary that many others should be employ'd in the Ministry, to *Dress* and *Water* what they had Planted, and take due Care of its Growth and Improvement, and likewise to *Plant* where the Apostles themselves could not come; and since those other Persons so employ'd were to publish the Gospel in foreign barbarous Nations, and to meet with the like Difficulties and Opposition as the Apostles did; 'twas necessary that *they* also should be endow'd with the like Powers and Abilities, and have the same Supports to enable them to discharge their Ministry with the like Resolution and Success.

'Twas by *these Means* that the Gospel, from such small and unpromising Beginnings, in so short a time made such a wonderful Progress as it did, and that against the utmost Endeavours of wicked Men and Devils to hinder it, and make it come to nothing.

Thus did this little inconsiderable *Seed*, as it appeared at first, soon shoot up, and grow into a stately *Tree*; and, like the Tree of Life in the midst of the Garden
of

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of God, spread its salutary Branches far
and wide; and has now taken so deep
and firm a Root, that all the Powers of
Hell, with all their Storms and Under-
minings, shall never be able to prevail
against it.

Immediately after the Apostles had
receiv'd those extraordinary Inspirations
and Gifts of the Holy Ghost, St. Peter's
first Sermon converted three thousand
Souls; and the Kingdom of God daily
increas'd to a Miracle, and *the Number of*
Disciples multiply'd in Jerusalem
Acts 6. 7. greatly, and a great Company even
of the Priests were obedient to
the Faith.

And what vast Numbers of Christi-
ans were there in a short time at *Corinth*,
at *Antioch*, in *Macedonia* and *Ephesus*, and
even in *Rome* it self, the chief Seat of the
Prince of Darkness, where the Disciples
were so remarkably zealous,
Rom. 1. 8. that *their Faith was spoken of*
throughout the World! Every
Place was in a few Years filled with
Christians; no Cruelty or Barbarity to-
wards them could stop the Progress of
the Gospel; the Blood of the Martyrs
made the Church still more fruitful; and
at the End of three Centuries, no long
space for so great a Change, the whole
Roman Empire, which was the greatest
part

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part of the then known World, became Believers in a *Crucified Saviour*. And now is verified the Saying of the Malicious Pharisees, *Behold, the World*

is gone after him! According to *Joh. 12. 19.*

the Prophecy of David long before, *His Dominion shall be from* *Psalms 72.*

Sea to Sea, and from the River

to the Ends of the Earth. All Kings shall fall down before him, all Nations shall do him Service; His Name shall be continued as long as the Sun, and Men shall be blessed in him; all Nations shall call him Blessed. And blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who only doth wonderful Things; blessed be his glorious Name for ever, and let the whole Earth be filled with the Majesty of his Glory!

And since our Holy Religion is thus evidently from above, and by the Almighty Power and peculiar Blessing and Providence of God, the Sound of the Gospel hath reached even to us; and we of this remote Part of the World, from the Place where it was at first planted, are so happy as to be Members of the Church of Christ: Let it be our Care to *Live* as such, and Walk worthy of our Holy Profession; that this Divine *Leaven* may influence our whole Soul, and the Seeds of Christian Virtue grow mightily, and thrive, and flourish in our Hearts, and bring forth Fruit in all our Conversation.

Reli-

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Reli-

Religion is an *Active* Principle, and must needs be so, the chief Ingredient of it being a sincere *Love of God above all things*; and *Love* is always a busy working Passion, and employs all the Powers and Faculties of the whole Man in doing what may render him most acceptable to the dear Object of his Love.

Let it be seen then, that we have Souls full of this Love of God, and our compassionate Saviour, by devoting ourselves entirely to their Service; and *that*, and that alone, will demonstrate the Truth of our Religion. For 'tis as impossible that any Man should be truly Religious, and not heartily make it his Business to recommend himself to the Divine Object of his Worship by a diligent Performance of what he hath required of him, and told him will be grateful to him; as 'tis for a Man to behave himself with Indifference, and a neglectful Disregard towards one he passionately loves. A Man may behave himself civilly, and with due outward Respect, and give a Complement now and then to those he has but little real Value or Esteem for, and there is an end; but he feels himself quite otherwise affected towards those that have won his *Heart*, for whom he thinks he can never do enough, and is always contriving how he may please them best, and

and in whose Company and Conversation is his chief Delight.

And therefore 'tis plain, *that* Man's Religion is no more than Complement, who when he has paid his outward Respects to God and his Redeemer, and addressed himself to them in the usual Forms, in a cold customary manner; as he sees others do; thinks he has done his Duty, and concerns himself no further: There's no hearty Affection in this, none of those *Warmths* which glow in the Breasts of those that have truly devoted themselves to him; and where there *are* those Warmths *within*, those affectionate Emotions of Soul towards him, as our chief Good, every Power and Faculty will be set on Work in an easy unforc'd natural Way, to *Express* that exceeding Love we have for him, so as may be most likely to gain his gracious Acceptance, and be most satisfactory to ourselves.

For true Affection *will* shew it self by something more than a fair Word, and a Cringe; and is restless and *dissatisfied* till it has done the best that it can, and is still full of Thought and Contrivance how to do it better. And therefore the *main* Ingredient of true Religion being, as our Lord himself hath assured us, *the Loving God with all our Hearts and Souls,*

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our Mind and Strength, it will have this Influence upon us; and if we find but little of the Influence, we may be sure we have as little of the Religion. For to conclude in a Word or two, wherever that is planted in an honest and good Heart, 'twill grow apace and flourish like a Grain of Mustard-seed, and be as fruitful in the Works of Piety as that Plant was in *Judaea*, (of the mighty Growth and Increase of which, the *Jews*, in their *Talmud*, give us some strange Instances:) and 'twill be as active too as *Leaven*, and give a new and holy *Ferment* to the Soul, and make our Thoughts and our Discourse favour of Heaven, as becomes those whose Inheritance is in that glorious Kingdom; and 'twill excite our heartiest Desires to attain it, and engage our best Endeavours to prepare and fit ourselves for it by a truly Christian Life. *Amen! Blessed Jesus, so may thy Kingdom come!*

The PRAYER.

I.

*M*OST Holy Jesus! Thou Eternal Son of the Blessed God! who in the Days of thy Humiliation for Sinners, didst appear

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as a Root out of a dry Ground, without Form and Comeliness, and wert despised and rejected of Men, who esteem'd thee not; but yet didst manifest thy Divinity, by many wonderful Works to all that did not obstinately shut their Eyes to all Conviction; and of thy infinite Mercy didst endow the first Planters of thy Holy Gospel with such miraculous Powers as should demonstrate the Religion they taught to be from God; whereby all Nations came to the Knowledge of that Salvation which thou didst purchase for them with thy most precious Blood: For ever ador'd and magnified be the unsearchable Riches of thy Power, thy Wisdom and thy Goodness, which are infinitely exalted above all Blessing and Praise; and may the Glory of thy Name be spread still more and more through every dark Corner of the Earth, and every Human Creature with Joy and Wonder embrace the Faith of Jesus, and entirely submit to thy Heavenly Government here, and partake of the Happiness of thy heavenly Kingdom above!

II.

O thou Righteous Branch *, * Jer. 23. 5.
under thy healthful Shadow we
shall be safe, defended from the intolerable
Scorchings of thy Father's Wrath, and from
all the Rage and Fury of the Spirits of Dark-
ness; O grant that we may always fly to thee

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for Refuge, and lodge securely under thy
Protection, and make sure of thy Favour,
which is better than Life it self, by an un-
feigned Faith, Obedience, and Love! And
may thy Heavenly Doctrine and Instructions
have such a powerful Influence upon my Soul,
that my Understanding being thoroughly en-
lightned by thy Truth, and giving an entire
Assent to all thy Revelations, may guide my
Will to the Choice, and my Affections to the
heartly Pursuit of my true Interest and chief
Good: That so, no longer living to my self,
but to thee, who hast so loved me as to give
thy self for me, a Sacrifice and Atonement
for my Sins, to satisfy the just Anger of my
Offended God, I may not only Sit
Cant. 2. 3. under thy Shadow with great
Delight, but, thy Fruit likewise
may be sweet unto my Taste; and I may
make it the great Pleasure of my Life to tread
in thy blessed holy Steps, and grow in Grace,
and the Knowledge and Love of thee my most
compassionate Redeemer: till at length my
weak infirm Mortality shall be swallowed up
of endless Bliss and Glory: Through thy
Merits and Mediation, O most Blessed and
Eternal Jesus! Amen, Amen.

PARABLE

PARABLE II.

Of a Man that went to Hire Labourers into his Vineyard.

Matth. xx. 1, &c.

For the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a Man that was a Householder, which went out early in the Morning to hire Labourers into his Vineyard.

And when he had agreed with the Labourers for a Penny a Day, he sent them into his Vineyard.

And he went out about the third Hour, and saw others standing idle in the Market-place,

And said unto them, Go ye also into the Vineyard, and whatsoever is right, I will give you; and they went their way.

And he went out about the sixth and ninth Hour, and did likewise.

And about the eleventh Hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the Day idle?

They say unto him, Because no Man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the Vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.

So when Even was come, the Lord of the Vineyard saith unto his Steward, Call the Labourers, and give them their Hire, beginning from the last unto the first.

And when they came that were hired about the eleventh Hour, they received every Man a Penny.

But when the first came, they suppos'd that they should have received more, and they likewise received every Man a Penny.

And when they had received it, they murmured against the Good-man of the House, Saying, These last have wrought but one Hour, and thou hast made them equal with us which have born the Burthen and Heat of the Day.

But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no Wrong: Didst thou not agree with me for a Penny?

Take that thine is, and go thy way, I will give unto this last even as unto thee.

Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine Eye evil because I am good?

So the last shall be first, and the first last; for many be called, but few chosen.

OUR Lord, when he spoke this Parable, seems to intend to obviate the Objection he foresaw would be made by the Jews, against the Gentiles being hereafter received by him, to an equal Share

Share with *them*, in the Blessings, and Privileges, and Rewards of that New Kingdom of God which he came to establish in the World: For They, having *born the Burthen and Heat of the Day*, in a long Observance of the Ceremonial Law of *Moses*, (which was a Yoke so heavy and so galling, that St. Peter could say, *Neither We nor our Fathers* Act 15.10. *were able to bear it*) he knew would think much that at last the *Gentiles* should be *made equal to them*, whom they us'd to look upon with Contempt, as Strangers and Foreigners to the Commonwealth of *Israel*, and whose very Conversation was esteemed a Defilement. This he foresaw they would by no means digest, but murmur at it, as a thing very unreasonable and unjust; and therefore, to justify his Proceeding in that manner, and furnish his Apostles with a sufficient Answer when any thing of this nature should be objected to them, he represents the Case fully and clearly in the Parable above recited; after having introduced it by saying, (as a Key to open the Meaning of it) that *many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first*, Chap. 19. ult.

For the Kingdom of Heaven, says he, (by which, in this place, may probably be signified, not the Gospel State only,

but the *whole* State of the true Religion from the first) *is like unto a Man that is a Householder, which went out early in the Morning to hire Labourers into his Vineyard.* By which may be meant either the first Revelation that God was pleas'd to make of his Will to *Adam* in Paradise, (which was the *Early Dawn* of the World,) thereby to engage him betimes to his Service, and prevent his being led away by the great Deceiver, to his Ruin; and his promising him, the better to

encourage and secure his Obedience, such a Reward at present as should fully compensate the sincerest Duty he could pay him; *(and we need not question but he gave him Hopes too of a nobler Recompence hereafter:)* Or it may signify the great Goodness of God to our first Parent and his wretched Offspring, after the *Fall*; who was pleased to commiserate their sad Condition, and by little and little made known his Will to them anew, and in the Days of *Abraham*, and the Patriarchs, expressly agreed with them for a *Peny a Day*, upon Condition of their faithful Obedience to him; assuring them that the best Service they could perform should be abundantly rewarded, in a most rich and fruitful Country which he would shew them,

Gen. 1. 26. &c.
— 2. 8, &c.

— 12
and

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them, and fix them in Possession of, and which for the Pleasantness and Plenty of it should be a second *Paradise*. And when he went out upon this gracious Design to gather to himself a Church, (which he often stiled his *Vineyard*, to signify how much *Isaiab 5.* he delighted in it, and the Care he took that it should thrive and flourish,) and to employ Labourers in the Services of it; 'tis said he found them *standing idle in the Market-place*, (whither those that wanted Employment used to go to be hired.) By which is signified the careless thoughtless Life, as to Religion, which the World then liv'd; Men being wholly taken up with low earthly Pursuits, how to Buy, and Sell, and get Gain, to provide for their Pleasures, and satisfy their sensual Appetites, not having God in all their Thoughts, or at best having very false and unworthy Notions of him, and almost wholly given to Idolatry. When the World was in this degenerate, and truly deplorable State, then it was that God began to take pity on it, and to call some out of it into his *Vineyard*, and teach them how to labour in it in such a manner as would be pleasing to him, that so in due time they might receive the promised Reward.

After

After this, he went out again about the *Third*, and then at the *Sixth*, and *Ninth Hour*, and did likewise. By the two first of which, is represented the Times of the Jewish Church under *Moses*, the *Judges*, and first *Kings*, when that Dispensation was brought to its Meridian Perfection, and God had amply rewarded the Posterity of *Abraham*, whom he called more early into his Vineyard, and fully made good all his Promises to him, relating to the Good Land, which he said he would give him for a Possession, and to his Seed after him. And by the Ninth Hour is represented the time of the *Prophets*, when that Church began to decline, and the blessed Days of the *Messiah* were approaching. And about the *Eleventh Hour*, towards the Close of the Jewish Oeconomy, He went out and found others Idle, and saith unto them, *Why stand ye here all the Day Idle?* That is, God then made a final and general Invitation to all, both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, to leave their former Vanities and evil Courses, and unprofitable Ceremonies, and jointly to come into that universal Church which he sent his eternal Son to be the Founder of: and by that Question of his, *Why stand ye here all the Day idle?* together with the Answer to it, *Because no Man hath hired us;* I suppose is meant the *Gentiles*, being hitherto

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hitherto passed by, and not expressly called by God to labour in his Vineyard, or to make a part of his Church, (tho' if they desired it, they might all along have been admitted into it) but *then* he saith unto *them*, as expressly as to the Jews, *Go Ye also into the Vineyard, and perform the Duty that shall be required of you, and whatsoever is Right that shall ye receive.* You also shall be Incorporated into the Church and People of God, and for your diligent and faithful Service, shall not fail of a suitable Reward.

So when the *Even* was come, the Lord of the Vineyard said unto his Steward, *Call the Labourers, and give them their Hire, beginning from the Last unto the First.* (Which is a Circumstance contrived the better to bring in what follows.) And when they came that were hired about the *Eleventh Hour*, they received every Man a Penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more, and they likewise received every Man a Penny. And when they had received it they murmured, &c. The true Meaning of which I suppose to be this; That when the Fullness of Time was come, in the *last* Dispensation of God, the *last* Call into his Church or Vineyard by Jesus Christ, who finished the Great Work of Man's Redemption upon the Cross; The Apostles having
first

first Preached the glad Tidings of the Gospel to the *Jews*, (who, for the most part, rejected them,) then call'd in the *Gentiles*, and propos'd to them for their Encouragement, the same full Reward

that was promised to the *Jews*,
Ephes. 3. 5. upon their sincerely embracing the Faith of *Jesus*, and submitting to his Government: That hence-

forth God would be no *Respe-*
Galat. 3. 28. *cter of Persons*; that no Difference should be made between the People of *Israel* and other Nations; but whoever would believe in

Mat. 28. 19. *Christ, and Repent, and be Bap-*
Mar. 16. *tised, and fear God, and work*
15, 16. *Righteousness, should be accepted*
Acts 10. *of him, and receive the same*
34, 35. *Gifts of the Holy Spirit, as we*
—44. 45. find they did, and have equal Title to Salvation.

This it was that caused such Murmuring and Discontent among the Jewish Converts, that the *Gentiles* who had laboured but one Hour, should in all Respects be made equal unto them who had born the Burthen and Heat of the Day; and therefore deserv'd a proportionably greater Reward. This raised their Envy against the *Gentile* Christians, and put them upon endeavouring to make *them* submit likewise to the Law of *Moses*; and

and was the Occasion of those fierce Contests between them, *Acts 15.* and of Saint Paul's writing his excellent Epistle to the *Galatians*, which gives a full Account of this Matter.

But the Answer which the Lord of the Vineyard made to the Murmurers in the Parable, was enough to silence all Objections and Quarrels of this nature; for he said to one of them, for all; *Friend, I do thee no wrong; didst not thou agree with me for a Penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way, I will give unto this last even as unto thee.* As if our Lord, by this Representation, had said; "God hath never failed in the Performance of his Promises to the Jewish Nation, but hath rewarded their Services to the full at all times, and even far beyond what they could pretend to deserve. And now, they shall be admitted to an equal share with others in the Privileges and Recompences of the Gospel, upon such Conditions as are proposed equally to all. But why they should expect greater Favours than others, I can see no Reason. And since no Sinner can possibly merit any thing at the hands of God, but after he hath done all he can, is still an unprofitable Servant; and the Promise of any the least Reward is of meer Grace and Fa-
 your;

“ your : every one ought humbly and
 “ thankfully to receive what God is
 “ pleas’d to promise him, as an Encou-
 “ ragement of his Obedience, without
 “ repining that others, who have not,
 “ it may be, been so long in the Vine-
 “ yard, have yet as much bestow’d up-
 “ on them; *For, is it not lawful for God*
 “ *to do what he will with his own?* Will
 “ you be so arrogant as to direct him
 “ how to dispose of his Bounty? *Is your*
 “ *Eye evil because God is good?* Are you
 “ so base as to envy those who partake
 “ of the same Mercy as you do; and
 “ grudge because God is pleased to make
 “ others happy as well as you? This is
 “ vile indeed !

So the first shall be last : Those that were
 first called into the Church of Christ, as
 the People of the *Jews* were, will be the
 last that will enter into it, (though at
 length we are assured that hap-

Rom. 11.
 25, 26.

py time shall come,) *and the*
last shall be first : Those that
 were last invited to the Christian Faith,
 as the *Gentiles* were, were the first that
 in any great Numbers embraced that
 blessed Offer ; and of whom the Christi-
 an Church did at first, and does now,
 chiefly consist. For though *many be cal-*
led, yet few are chosen : Though the Gos-
 pel was preached to the whole People of
 the

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the *Jews*, yet few so sincerely embrac'd it as to be such as our Lord could reckon among the Number of his Chosen. And the same is true of the rest of the World too; vast Multitudes, though they have heard the joyful Sound of the Gospel, yet stop their Ears against it, and persist in their Infidelity; and many of those that seem to believe, and have been Baptised, and call themselves Christians, yet live at such a lewd Heathen Rate, as is directly contrary to their Profession, and will cause Christ to disown them at the Great Day of Retribution, and for ever reject them with these cutting Words, *Depart from me, I know ye not, ye Workers of Iniquity.*

Having thus shewn the true Meaning and Design of this Parable, which, as I said at the Beginning, was to obviate the Objection our Lord foresaw would be made by the *Jews*, against the *Gentiles* being received to an equal Share with *them* in the Rewards, and Privileges, and Blessings of the Gospel; and to furnish his Apostles with a sufficient Answer to it: I shall now proceed to make some Improvement of it to our Practice.

I. And *First*, it gives us so full and clear an Account of the great and unfeigned Desire God has all along had, and still has, of the Happiness of Mankind, and

and the gracious Methods he hath taken in order to it; as must needs excite the utmost Admiration, and Praise, and Love, of those that will consider it with due Seriousness and Attention.

For 1st, (Give me leave to enlarge a little upon so comfortable an Argument) there was no Age of the World wherein he did not affectionately call and invite 'em to Embrace that which was their true and great Interest, and give them sufficient Direction and Encouragement to pursue it heartily, and effectually to attain it. He had no sooner created Man, and formed a Creature of great Excellency, after his own Image and Likeness; but he took Care to make him as good, and as happy, as that his excellent Nature was capable of being; to preserve that his Image and Likeness entire, unfullied, and undefaced, that he might always look with Delight upon that noble Reflection of himself, and always, as at first, pronounce it *very Good*.

And in order to this, (knowing the fatal Consequence of Idleness and Sloth) he found out betimes a suitable Employment for him; and not only placed him in a delightful Paradise, to dress
Gen. 2. 8. it, and to keep it, as a means to
 ——— 15. preserve his Body in perfect
 Health and Vigour, but filled his Soul
 with

with excellent Endowments, and all useful Knowledge; and writ upon his Heart a Law that was holy, just, and good, and most agreeable to his Nature, to which he expected he should pay Obedience, (as well as to the *Positive* Command he gave him of not eating the Forbidden Fruit) and which Obedience, by his all-wise and good Contrivance, should in all Respects tend directly to his Happiness. The Recompence of his Duty *Here*, was as great as this World could afford: And as to what Hopes God might give him of a *Future* Reward in the Celestial Paradise above; though the Scripture indeed is silent, yet *Innocence*, although no express Promises were made, could not but have glorious Expectations. And how delightful soever that earthly Paradise might be, yet the Pleasures of it must needs be so far short of what a Rational Soul is capable of enjoying, that it must leave it still empty, and desirous of something beyond it, as we see *Eve* was, when she coveted the Forbidden Fruit, which she was told would open her Eyes, and make her like to God. And those clear bright Notions of Heaven, which we may suppose *Adam* had before he fell, and which were much improved and enlarged by the Converse he had with its blessed Inhabitants; could

not but make him, even amidst all the Delights of his Paradise below, full of Longing, ardent Aspirations, after that infinitely more Glorious and Blissful State, in the constant Presence and Enjoyment of his Maker. And therefore, unless God had promis'd him, or at least given him some Hopes of that Happiness likewise in due time, (and which indeed is his only true Happiness) as the Reward of his faithful and entire Obedience here; he would have been uneasy and dissatisfied even in the State of Innocence, which can by no means be supposed. But if, together with such a delightful Life here, as had he not fallen he would have liv'd, he had a Promise of a full and endless Felicity above; this must needs have made him a happy Creature indeed, and such as God seems to have at first design'd he should be.

For no doubt but he design'd him for all that Happiness of which he had made him capable, and so earnestly desirous of enjoying; and therefore we may well suppose, that during his State of Innocence, he did not only enjoy the height of earthly Pleasure; but likewise had good Ground to hope, upon Condition of his constant Obedience, that he should at length exchange Paradise for Heaven.

And

And what greater Encouragement could there possibly be, for a most exact and entire Duty, than this?

Thus did God call our *First Parents* into his Vineyard, and engage them early in his Service; and one would think so firmly too, that nothing could ever have seduc'd 'em from it. And how happy would it have been for their Posterity, had they not forfeited that blessed Condition in which their good Creator placed them!

But alas! How soon was the Case sadly altered! and the Hopes of Heaven, the Favour of God, and the chief Comforts of this Life too, all lost in one dire Instant! Instead of the unspeakable Joys and Tranquility of *Innocence*, their Souls were fill'd with the Remorse, the Shame, the Confusion, and Horrors of *Guilt*; instead of almost Angelical Knowledge, Ignorance, and Error, and Delusion; and instead of perfect Health in a most delightful Paradise, from which they should have been translated into Heaven without dying, Diseases and Sorrow in a forlorn curs'd World, over-run with Briars and Thorns, and then a painful Death, which, without infinite Mercy, would have been the Entrance into Death eternal! And all this too, they intail'd upon their wretched Offspring. What a

dismal Alteration was here, as the just Punishment of Ingratitude and Disobedience to so good a God!

But see how great the Divine Mercy is; there was an early, though
Gen. 3. 15. mysterious, Promise made of a Recovery; and many Advances towards it in the succeeding Ages of the World; divers gracious Calls did God make of Labourers into his Vineyard; or, in other Words, divers Revelations did he give to Mankind of his Will, and the way to regain his Favour, and sufficient Encouragement all along to incline them to observe it. And
Romans 2. because the Mind of Man was so darkned by a long Course of Wickedness, and the Law that God had written upon his Heart as the Rule of his religious and moral Actions, thereby so obliterated, and as it were blotted out, that it was of very little Use: Therefore God saw it needful to make those Revelations more *Plain* and *Express*, as we find he did to the *Patriarchs* and to *Moses*, and subjoin to them such Promises of Reward to the Obedient, as would strike home upon the *Senses*, (which then were all in all,) and so by degrees to win them over intirely to his Service by Arguments that were then most prevalent, and at the same time enlighten their

their Understandings, by little and little, with the noblest and most beneficial Knowledge. And thus the great Design of Man's Redemption was carried on from one Step to another, till the Prophets spoke still more expressly of it as then near approaching, and made known its true Nature, and by whom it should be effected; and thereby prepared the way for its Reception, and invited all Men to embrace it when it should be offered; and that upon more spiritual Regards than before, as became the spiritual Kingdom of the Messias, who was to be the *Mediator of* *Hebr. 8. 6.* *a better Covenant* than was made with the Fathers, and that *establish'd upon better Promises.*

And when that blessed time was come, then were the Arms of the divine Mercy spread wide open to receive all the World; then appeared that wonderful *Grace of God, which brought Salvation to all Men* that would accept it, and comply with those reasonable and easy Terms upon which it was offered to them. This was that gracious Call which was made at the *Eleventh Hour*, when we poor *Gentiles*, that had so long before sat in Darkness and the Shadow of Death, were taken pity on, and hired, and sent into the Vineyard, to work the Works

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of Evangelical Righteousness, and had
the Promise of equal Reward with others
upon our diligent and faithful Service,
tho' we began so late.

Then were we called from the most
fatal Idleness, and Neglect of our best
Interest, and put in a way to work out
our own Salvation; we were taken from
the Market, and sent into the Vineyard;
from the World, and receiv'd into the
Church; we were delivered from our
former vain, and vicious, and filthy Con-
versation, and all the miserable Conse-
quences of it; and restored to Quiet and
Peace of Mind, true Comfort and Plea-
sure here, and intitled to Heaven here-
after. O, what a blessed, happy Change
is this! That we who were Strangers
Eph. 2. 12. from the Covenants of Promise,
—19. having no Hope, and without God
in the World, should be made Fellow-citizens
with the Saints, and of the Household of
God!

O that Men would therefore praise the
Lord for his Goodness, and de-
Psal. 107. clare the Wonders that he hath
done for the Children of Men! For he ga-
thered them out of all Lands, from the East
and from the West, from the North and
from the South; when they went astray in the
Wilderness out of the way, and found no
City to dwell in; hungry and thirsty, their
Soul!

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Soul fainted in them: Then he delivered them from their Distress, and led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a City of Habitation, even the glorious and eternal Mansions of the Heavenly Jerusalem!

Let us therefore walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith we are called; and not as if we were become

Ephes.4.1.

Heathens again, in the Vanity of our Mind, having the Understanding darkned, being alienated from the Life of God; and as past feeling, giving our selves over unto Lasciviousness, to work all Uncleaness with Greediness; for we have not so learned Christ. But let us put off, as concerning the former Conversation, the Old-man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful Lusts, and be renewed in the Spirit of our Mind. And let us put on the New-man, which after God is created in Righteousness and true Holiness.

We are called unto Glory and

2 Pet. 1. 3.

Virtue, to the former as the Reward of the latter; and have exceeding great and precious Promises, that by these we might be Partakers of ——— 4. a divine Nature, having escaped the Corruption of the World through Lust.

Let us endeavour therefore to excel in Virtue now, that we may be Crowned with Glory in Heaven; and as he that hath

*1 Pet. 1. 15. called us is holy, so let us be holy
in all manner of Conversation.*

We are now actually engaged in the Service of Christ, and therefore cannot excuse our standing all the Day idle, by saying *no Man hath hired us*: Baptism is our *general* Call into the Vineyard of our Lord, and we have *particular* Calls too, by the good Spirit of God, to move and stir us up to a faithful Performance of our Duty; it becomes us therefore to labour diligently in it, that at length we may have our Reward.

II. For *Secondly*, When God has done so much on his part to make us Happy, we must co-operate on ours, and industriously improve those gracious Opportunities he hath put into our hands for our eternal Good.

We must not think our great Master has sent us into his Vineyard only to laze, and faunter away our Time, to gaze about us, and admire the Excellency of the Fruit, and commend the Labours of others, without doing any thing our selves; No, he hath hired us to *Work* there, and in our several Stations, according to our best Ability to promote the flourishing Estate of it still more and more. And upon Condition of our so doing, he that is faithful and true hath assured us, that *whatever is right we shall receive.*

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receive. He hath not indeed agreed with *us* for a *Peny a Day*, as he did with those whom he hired at first; that is, he hath not given such express Promises in the new Covenant of *Temporal* Rewards, as he did in the old; and the Reason is, because the Duty he hath laid upon us now, is more *Spiritual* and Excellent, and requires the Labour of the Mind more than of the Body; and therefore a *Spiritual* Reward, as 'tis more valuable, so is more suitable and adequate to it: But we have abundant Security of such a Reward as *that*, according to the Degree of our Industry and Diligence; and every Leaf almost of the New Testament assures us of a proportionable Increase of Grace here, and Weight of Glory hereafter. However, had we nothing more to depend upon than this general Promise of our blessed Lord, *Whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive*; we need not fear being sent empty away: nay more, we need not doubt of receiving much more than we can possibly pretend to deserve, from him whose Goodness and Bounty is infinite, unless 'tis our own Fault, and we forfeit the Reward by standing all the Day idle, and not endeavouring to perform the Service. For nothing more certain, even in the Christian Religion, tho' the most gracious and merciful Institution that ever was, than this; *no Labour,*

Labour, no Reward. And what St. Paul said relating to bodily Idleness, *He that will not work, neither let him eat*, is perfectly the Sense of the Gospel with Respect to spiritual Laziness and Negligence; and will be found a sad Truth by many when Christ shall come to enquire into what we have *done*, and give us a Recompence according to our *Works*. None but the good and faithful Servant shall taste of his *Master's Joy*; and the slothful and unprofitable shall be *bound Hand and Foot, and cast into outer Darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth for ever.*

There was Duty to be perform'd in the State of Innocence; and tho' it was a Service that was perfect Freedom, pleasant and delightful, yet it was a *Service*; and the Works of it, tho' not a servile Drudgery, yet required Thought, and Application, and Diligence; and 'twas no more good for Man even *then*, to be *idle*, than to be *alone*. How much more then, are we now oblig'd to Industry, when our Work is become (tho' by our own Fault) so much more laborious and difficult; and as indispensibly required of us as ever, in order to our receiving the Reward! A hearty *Endeavour* 'tis true, (and blessed be God's Goodness for it) will be accepted instead of a compleat Perfor-

Performance of the Work ; for 'tis not merely the *Burthen* that any Man bears, and the Abundance of Work that he can do, that renders him acceptable to the merciful God, and who is infinitely above being in the least advantag'd by our utmost Services, but the *willing Readiness and Sincerity of Mind* with which he applies himself to do the best that he can. But then, nothing less than *that* will do; and the want of it will admit of no Excuse.

Thus in the Parable, those that were hired at the *eleventh* Hour, because they sincerely and diligently perform'd their Duty in it, to the utmost of their Power, receiv'd as much as those who pleaded that they had *born the Burthen and Heat of the Day*. They equall'd them in an honest Industry and Diligence, and therefore their Reward was equal too.

Not but that he who actually labours more *Abundantly*, and for a longer time than others, and is constantly doing extraordinary Service to God and his Church, and does it upon an unblameable Principle, shall have a suitable Remuneration; for here is all that can be to recommend a Man to God's peculiar Favour and extraordinary Bounty: But then, because the Work receives its Value from the hearty Diligence, and good Inten-

Intention with which it was wrought ; when a Man is truly sincere in what he does, and his Industry great, tho' his time of Labour be short, yet his Reward shall not be less than that of those who had longer Time and more Opportunity, but yet did not make greater Improvements in their whole Day, than he did in an Hour or two at last.

Of this we have a pregnant Instance in the Blessed Apostle *S. Paul*, who was call'd last of all to that high Office, and

1 Cor. 15. 8, 9. tells us that he was *born out of due time*, and so in some Sense *the least of the Apostles*; and yet,

2 Cor. 12. 11, 12. because *He labour'd more abundantly than they all*, he was in no-

thing behind the very chiefest of them, in Signs and Wonders, and mighty Deeds, and abundance of heavenly Visions and Revelations, while here on Earth, and no doubt has an equal Share of Glory with them in Heaven.

We see then, there is no Exemption from labouring in our Lord's Vineyard, in our several Stations, and according to our best Ability ; and if we hope to receive the Rewards of Christianity at last, we must diligently and faithfully perform the Duties of it now. And there can't possibly be greater Encouragement than there is for every one sincerely to do his best ;

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best; because a hearty Endeavour, tho' a Man's Strength and Ability is but small, and 'tis late before he begins, will yet be very graciously accepted, and rewarded bountifully, even beyond our Expectation. For, *if there be first a willing Mind*, (as the Apostle says in the Case of Charity, and which is equally true as to all other Duties) *it*

is accepted according to what a 2 Cor. 8. 12. *Man hath, and not according to what he hath not.*

Let no Man therefore despair of God's Mercy, tho' 'tis the *eleventh* Hour, the latter end of his Life, before he complies with his Saviour's Call to Repentance and a holy Conversation: for, tho' his refusing so long hath added very much to his Guilt, and made his Work much more difficult; yet a hearty Endeavour even *then* to work the Works of Righteousness, will meet with a favourable Acceptance from him who *desireth not the Death of any Sinner, but rather, that he should turn from his Wickedness, and live.* But then, he must redeem the Time he hath lost with extraordinary Diligence for the future, and walk exceeding circumspectly, and improve every Minute to the best Advantage, as the only way to make some Amends for his former Idleness, and great Neglects,
and

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and wasting so much of the precious Opportunity God gave him of working out his Salvation, either in doing nothing towards it, or else in the Service of the Devil and his Lusts. Having often in his Mind, as a Means to excite and quicken his Industry, the Words of our great Lord, *Rev. 22. 12. Behold, I come quickly, and my Reward is with me, to give to every Man according as his Work shall be.*

III. But *Thirdly*, Be it early or late that we have begun to labour in the Vineyard, and tho' our Diligence hath been never so great; tho' we have really *born the Burthen and Heat of the Day*, or else done the Work of many Hours in one, by an extraordinary Industry and Zeal; yet we must have a care of thinking too highly of our Performances, and pretending to merit *any* thing by them, much less any *extraordinary* Recompence at the Hands of God, and likewise of envying those whom he pleases to make the Objects of his peculiar Favour.

'Tis true, God hath in general promised, that *what ever is right he will*
John 10. 27. 28. give us, and if we abound in the
1 John 2. work of the Lord, our Labour shall
25. not be in vain; and more particularly, that *everlasting Life* in his glorious Kingdom above shall be the
Re-

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Reward of those who by patient Continuance in well doing, seek for Glory and Honour, and Immortality, which is the Hire of the Christian Labourer, as a long and prosperous Life in the Land of Canaan, was the Penny a Day, for which he agreed with the Jews. This he has promised to all that will perform the Conditions, and do the Duty he requires of them with Faithfulness and Diligence; and what he hath promised he is able to perform, and will most certainly, unless the fault be our own. For no Man ever did, or shall serve God for nought; doubtless there is a Reward for the Righteous, and their Expectation shall not be cut off; for God *Heb. 6. 10.* is not unjust, that he should forget their Work, and Labour that proceedeth of Love. And when the Evening comes, when Time shall be swallowed up of Eternity, we shall every one be called to receive our Hire; as we are assured in the close of this Parable.

All this is very true, and we may and ought to labour in prospect of it, encouraging our selves by *Heb. 11. 26.* often looking at the Recompence of Reward, to a constant Diligence in full Assurance of Hope unto the End; that so we may not be slothful, *Heb. 6. 11. 12.* but followers of them, who thro' Faith and Patience inherit the Promises. But then

then we must consider, that these Promises did proceed from the meer Grace and Favour of God, who had a *Previous Right* to our utmost Service; as being our great *Creator, in whom we Live and Move, and have our Being*, and who can't possibly receive any the least Benefit or Advantage from the joint Labours of his whole Creation. And therefore, says

our Lord, *when ye have done all*
Lu. 17. 10. those things that are commanded

you, say, we are unprofitable Servants, we have done that which upon Innumerable Obligations already laid upon us, *was our Duty to do*, without any further Expectation of Reward. We are abundantly paid *beforehand* for all that we can ever do for our Good God, should we labour in his Service with all Fidelity to Eternal Ages.

With what Face then can any one pretend with those in the Parable to Merit *more* than God has promised, when those very Promises, are of his meer Bounty, and Goodness, and Infinitely beyond what the *Best* of us can pretend to deserve! Indeed, we all deserve alike; that

is, none of us deserve any thing,
Rom. 2. but Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguish, which is
 the just due of *every Soul that doth evil*.
 And therefore, if God of his great Mer-

cy

cy is pleased to make us such large and inestimable Promises, as the Reward of our Poor Worthless Duty, and we are as sure of them if we perform the Duty, as if we had them in Hand; methinks we should rather go away rejoicing, and magnify our great Master's undeserved Bounty and Goodness, than enviously think much and repine that others share in his Bounty, and fare as well, and it may be better than we.

For as for God's making some the *Peculiar* Objects of his Favour *here*, and thereby seeming to design them for greater Degrees of Glory than others in Heaven, which is apt to raise our Envy, and make us Murmur at God's unequal Dealing; I'm sure I should be very unworthy, not only of the lowest Room in that blessed Place, but of the least Blessing here below; should I have One Dissatisfy'd Thought about it. If God makes good his Promise of eternal Life to *me*, who have been so failing in my Performance of the Condition he required in order to it; this is so great a Mercy, as should fill my Soul so full of Praise and Love, and Joy, as to leave no room in it for any Discontent, at anothers greater Happiness, let that other be who and what he will. *For why should my Eye be evil because God is so wonderfully Good? Is it not lawful for*

to do what he will with his own, and bestow his peculiar Favours as he pleases?

The Blessed in Heaven are Wiser and Better, and more grateful to their great Benefactor, than to think much at any of his Disposals of this Nature; and there is nothing *there* but mutual Love and Rejoycing at each others Happiness, tho' *One Star differs from another Star in Glory*, and many that were here supposed to be first, are last, and the last first. But all joyn together with the greatest Ardour and Transport in Hymns of Praise to God, and Songs of Triumph. And thus should we on Earth be perfectly satisfied, whatever Difference he shall please to make between one Man and another in conferring his Divine Gifts and Graces, or any other of his Blessings on them, and chusing out some before others to be extraordinary Instruments of his Glory in this World, and to enjoy as extraordinary Degrees of Happiness in the next. For he that knows the Hearts of Men, is the best Judge whom to prefer before others; and 'tis not what *we* think of our Brethren or our selves, that signifies, or *should* signifie any thing in this matter, but what God thinks, who cannot think amiss, or be mistaken. Besides, were there no other Reason for his proceeding thus, but his Good Will

and

and Pleasure ; this would be sufficient, and there *needs* no other. For he that can pretend to deserve nothing at all himself, has no wrong done him, tho' another is preferred before him. If a Company of condemned Rebels are Pardoned, and received to *Great* Degrees of their Prince's Favour, the very *least* of which the best of them does not deserve ; they have no Reason certainly to complain that some of them are distinguished with peculiar Marks of his Affection, and receive extraordinary Expressions of his Bounty, and are admitted to a nearer attendance upon his Person ; and greater Intimacy with him than the rest ; for Reasons best known to himself. Perhaps this might create Envy in those that are not of the happy Number, and a hard thought of the Prince too for his Partiality ; But without all Reason, and with a great deal of Ill-Nature and Ingratitude. For no Man is the less Happy (unless he makes himself so) because another is happier than he ; and 'tis nothing but Pride and Self-Conceit and an unthankful Undervaluing of what we already enjoy, that makes us Envy and Grudge at one another's better Fortune.

Were we thoroughly sensible of the happy difference between Condemnation and Pardon, between being Vessels of Wrath, and Vessels of Mercy, between a fearful

Expectation of Judgment, and fiery Indignation, and the blessed Hopes of Eternal Happiness in Heaven; We should not be so ready to Murmur that some are made Vessels of *Greater Honour* than we, and shall have a *Greater Share* of the *Cœlestial Glory*. Oh no! One Drop of Mercy to such Wretches as we are, who should have been so infinitely Miserable without it; is a Cordial that will so Cheer and Rejoyce the Heart of him that has a due Apprehension of the dismal Condition he was in before, as utterly to drive out all gloomy sullen Discontented Thoughts, and make him perfectly easy and satisfied in his blessed Change.

So that the Doctrine of *Election*, if rightly understood, and nothing else of a worse Nature added to it, has nothing in it that can justly offend or startle any Man. There is no Injury done by it to any one, no Injustice or Hardship in it in the least; nothing but what is highly reasonable and fitting, and what is so far from lessening, that it very much exalts the Mercy and Goodness of God, and Increases the Happiness of Mankind, and adds to the Glory and Beauty of the Church.

Every Good Christian is *Elect and Precious*, chosen out of the World, redeemed from its Vain and Filthy Conversation, and made one of God's Holy Ones, and
pecu.

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peculiar People; and the *Saints*, or the
Elect, signify in Scripture those that have
given themselves up to the Faith and
Obedience of Christ. But some of these
are more *eminently* so than others; the
Choice Jewels of the Kingdom, the bright
Ornaments of our Holy Religion, the
great Lights of the World, and shining
Examples of an extraordinary Piety, and
peculiar Instruments in God's Hand, some
in a publick, others in a more private Ca-
pacity, of advancing his Honour, and the
Interest of his Kingdom, and doing good
to Mankind.

Thus, when the Christian Church was
first established, tho' *every* sincere Disci-
ple of Jesus was very dear to him, and
one of his chosen ones, and an Heir of
Eternal Glory; yet all were not
Apostles, or *Prophets*, or *Pastors* 1 Cor. 12.
and *Teachers*, and intrusted with 29.
a Share in the Government and Edificati-
on of the Church. And those
that were, had *Diversities of*—4. 5, 6.
Gifts, and Operations, and disse-
rent Administrations in it, as God was
pleased to divide to every Man severally,
as his Divine Wisdom saw most condu-
cive to the Benefit and Advantage of the
whole. And 'tis but necessary that in
every Society, there should be such a Di-
stinction of one Member from another;

some employ'd this way, some that, some plac'd in a higher Station, some in a lower; And (as *St. Paul* argues to this very purpose) each Member is useful in his Place, and each have need of other: So that, as in the natural Body, the *Eye*, or the *Head*, the noblest and ruling Members, can't say to the *Hands* or the *Feet*, the Inferiour, and working drudging parts, *we have no need of you*: just so it is in the Spiritual Body of Christ, which is his Church.

Now, if it be so necessary to the Good Government and Edification of the Church, and so conducive to God's Honour, and the Salvation of Mankind, that there should be divers Orders of Men in it, of different Excellency, and Ability, according to the different Services he shall please to employ them in; What more reasonable, than that God should make choice of whom he pleases for those several Employments, and confer proportionable Degrees of Honour upon them, and endow 'em with suitable Gifts? And when they have faithfully Discharg'd their Trust; what more Congruous and Fitting, than for him to reward them in a more extraordinary manner in the Church Triumphant above?

Here is a manifest Preference indeed, of one before another, and some that are first

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first in their *own* esteem may be last in God's, and the last may be first; but God designs it not to the Prejudice of any, but rather to every ones Advantage; so that no Man has reason to complain of such a particular Election as this, (which is all that can be prov'd relating to it from this Parable) and 'twill be very displeasing to God, if our Eye is Evil, when his is so very Merciful and Good.

Thus, *Many are called, but few chosen*; that is, (as I conceive it signifies in this Place) among the great Numbers that are invited to the Gospel, and heartily embrace it too; *but few are chosen* to be the peculiar Favourites, and as 'twere *Ministers of State* to the Majesty of Heaven. But yet all shall have the Labourers Penny, that do their Duty Faithfully and Diligently in their Station, how low and mean soever it may be. *What ever is Right* our great and good Master will certainly give to us all; and so boundless is his Bounty, that Eternity can never exhaust it, to those that sincerely love him, and obey from the *Rom. 6. 17.* Heart that form of Doctrine which he delivered to them. And even the lowest Degree of that Happiness which he hath prepared for his Servants in Heaven, is such as Eye hath not seen, nor Ear hear'd, neither can it now enter into the Heart

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of Man to conceive. Wherefore, Let us
be stedfast, Unmoveable, always abounding
in the Work of the Lord; for as much as we
know that our Labour shall not be in vain in
the Lord.

The P R A Y E R.

I.

‘ **A**ND thou most gracious God! the Father
‘ of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hast blef-
‘ sed us Gentiles, with all spiritual Blessings
‘ in Heavenly things in Christ, and
‘ Eph. 1. 3, &c. hast chosen us in him, that we
‘ should be Holy and without blame before him
‘ in Love; and hast called us to the Adoption
‘ of Children to thy self, according to the
‘ good Pleasure of thy Will, and to the Eter-
‘ nal Praise and Glory of thy Grace, whereby
‘ thou hast made us accepted in the Beloved:
‘ We humbly bow our Knees unto thee, be-
‘ seeching thee to give unto us the Spirit of
‘ Wisdom and Revelation in the Knowledge
‘ of thee; That the Eyes of our Understand-
‘ ing being enlightned, we may know what is
‘ the hope of our Calling, and what the Rich-
‘ es of the Glory of the Inheritance of the
‘ Saints, and how great thy Compassion and
‘ Mercy hath been towards us, who hast Quick-
‘ ned

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‘ ned us, when we were Dead in Eph 2. 1.
‘ Trespasses and Sins.
‘ And do thou strengthen us
‘ with might by thy Spirit in the Eph. 3. 16,
‘ inner Man, that Christ may dwell &c.
‘ in our Hearts by Faith, and being rooted
‘ and grounded in Love, we may be able to
‘ comprehend what is the Breadth and Length,
‘ and Depth, and Heighth, and to know the
‘ Love of Christ which passeth Knowledge,
‘ that we may be filled with all the fulness of
‘ God! And to thee be Glary in the Church,
‘ by Christ Jesus, throughout all Ages, World
‘ without end! Amen.

II.

And thou, O blessed Jesus, who art the
great Lord of the Vineyard, the Head and
Governour of the Christian Church, and in
whose Hands are the Hearts of all Men to
turn them whithersoever thou pleasest;
‘ Have Mercy upon all Jews, Turks, Infidels
‘ and Hereticks; take from them all
‘ Ignorance, Hardness of Heart, and Con-
‘ tempt of thy Word; that at length they
may effectually hear and obey thy gracious Call,
and come in Unanimously, and submit to thy
Scepter, and all the World may see the Salva-
tion of God; that so thou who in infinite
Mercy hast been a Light to lighten the Gen-
tiles, mayst be the Glory of thy People Israel.
And Grant, O blessed Lord! that I who had
the

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*the Happiness to be sent into thy Vineyard in
my tender Tears, and call'd betimes to thy
Faith and Service, and have been fully in-
structed in all things Necessary to be believed
and done in order to my favourable Accept-
ance with thee, and have wanted no manner
of Encouragement to a sincere Performance
of my Duty: O grant, that all this Goodness
may have its due Effect upon me, and bind
me inseparably to thee, by the Cords of Love!
But what shall I say in excuse for my past
Negligence and Sloth, and even worse, much
worse! How unaccountably have I trifled
away abundance of my precious time, and
spent it in the Market rather than my Closet,
or the Temple, in Vain and Worldly, rather
than Heavenly Pursuits; and stupidly took
but very little Care about the One thing need-
ful! O my compassionate Redeemer, with Pi-
ty look upon me; and tho' it be the Ninth or
Eleventh Hour, the Decline, or the Evening
of my Life; yet call me so powerfully by thy
prevailing Grace, that I may apply my self
in earnest to work out my Salvation with Fear
and Trembling; and thro' thy unspeakable
Mercy, may at last receive that Inestimable
Reward, which thou art pleas'd to promise
to sincere Obedience. In thee, O Lord, do I
trust, O cast not out my Soul; and thine be
the Praise, and the Glory, for ever and ever.
Amen!*

PARA-

P A R A B L E III.

*Of the Man's Two Sons, whom he Com-
manded to go to Work in his Vineyard.*

Mat. xxi. 28, &c.

*A certain Man had two Sons; and he came
to the First, and said, Son, Go work to-
Day in my Vineyard. He Answered and
said, I will not; but afterward he repent-
ed, and went.*

*And he came to the Second, and said likewise;
and he answered and said, I go Sir, but
went not.*

*Whether of them Twain did the Will of his
Father? They say unto him, the first.
Jesus saith unto them, the Publicans and
the Harlots go into the Kingdom of God
before you.*

THis Parable was spoken to the chief
Priests and Elders of the Jews,
when they came to Jesus as he was teach-
ing in the Temple, and demanded of him
by what Authority he acted as he did,
and took so much upon him, as he had
lately done, in riding in Triumph into Je-
rusalem,

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salem, and admitting the Hosanna's of the

People, as to the Son of David,
Ver. 12. *and then Casting out those that
bought and sold in the Temple, and
overthrowing the Tables of the Money Chang-
ers, and the Seats of those that sold Doves,*
who were allowed to drive that Trade
there for the Convenience of those that
came to Offer, and to Sacrifice.

To which Demand, he wisely waved
giving a direct Answer, knowing they lay
upon the Catch to find some matter of
Accusation against him; and put another
Question to *them*, viz. *whether the Baptism
of John, was from Heaven or of Men?*
Which was so contriv'd, as you may see,
v. 25. 26. that after consulting together,
they thought it their best way to say they
could not tell. To which our Lord rejoins,
*neither tell I you by what Authority I do these
things:* Tho' by this he intimated plainly
enough, that he and John (who was by all
held to be a Prophet) acted by the same
Authority, and received their Commis-
sion from Heaven.

And then, to give a due Reproof to
those Hypocritical Pretenders to extraor-
dinary Holiness, and exact Obedience to
the Divine Commands, when there was
nothing of it in reality, and make them
condemn themselves with their own
Mouths; He proposed to them the above

reci-

recited Parable; and asked them which of the Two was the Obedient Son, He that Rudely and Undutifully told his Father, when he Commanded him to Work in his Vineyard, that he *would not*, but afterward bethought himself better, and *Repented and went*; or he that smoothed him over with good Words, and said *I go, Sir*, but never thought any more of the Matter, and *went not*? To which they reply'd as they could do no other, *He did his Father's Will, not that spoke him fairest, but who effectually did as he Commanded.* And then, our Lord immediately returned upon them and said, *Verily I say unto you, that the Publicans and Harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you.* As if he had said, "Notwithstanding all
 " your specious Pretences to the greatest
 " Sanctity, All your high Professions of
 " Zeal for God, and devoting your selves
 " intirely to his Service; and large Pro-
 " mises of what you will do in Obedience
 " to his Will, and Vainglorious Thank-
 " ing him that you are *not as other Men are,*
 " *Extortioners, Unjust, Adulterers, or even*
 " *as that Publican,* and the like: He that
 " sees your Hearts knows the Rottenness
 " and Falshood of them, that all is but
 " Hypocrisy and empty Appearance;
 " and there is more likelihood of even the
 " vilest sort of People, and the greatest
 " Sin-

“ Sinners, coming to a true Sense of their
 “ Duty, and hearty Performance of it,
 “ and so of attaining the Reward of it at
 “ last, than of your doing so, that have
 “ laid aside all Sincerity, and Impiously
 “ think to impose upon God by a fair out-
 “ side, and a few fine Words.

And the Event shew'd this to be true; for several *Publicans*, as *Matthew* and *Zaccheus*; and *Harlots*, as *Mary Magdalene*, and that other *Mary*, *Lu. 7. 38. who washed Jesus Feet with her Tears, and anointed them with precious Ointment, and wiped them with the Hairs of her Head*, were converted from their sinful Courses to the Faith of Christ, and became great Instances of sincere Holiness, and most exemplary Religion; but of the *Pharisees*, and *Scribes*, and *Rulers*, so few could be wrought upon by all that our Saviour said or did, that they themselves could say, *Have any of the Rulers or the Pharisees believed on him?* And our Lord tells us the Reason of this, in that saying of his to them, *John 5. 44. How can ye Believe, who receive Honour one of another, and seek not the Honour that cometh from God only?* They had no real desire of following and embracing Truth, and recommending themselves to the Favour of God by unfeigned inward Piety: But their sole Aim was by making a great out-

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outward Shew of Religion, in a punctual Observance of the Ritual Ceremonial part of it, to be cry'd up and honour'd by the People, as exceeding Devout and Holy Men; to be call'd *Rabbi*, and have the respectful Greetings of every Body they met, and be placed in the highest Seats in the Synagogues, and have the chief Rooms at Feasts; and under the Cover of so great a Reputation, be the better able to compass their avaricious Designs. And no Wonder that such Hypocrites as these (as he that knew their Hearts has assured *Mat. 23.* us they were) should be at the greatest Distance from the Kingdom of God, and most of all averse from the Religion that Jesus taught; which consisted of Humility, and Self-denial, and contempt of the World, and Purity of Heart, and hungering and thirsting after nothing so much as real, undissembled Righteousness; which were by no means agreeable, to a Proud, Ambitious, Intriuguing Pharisee. The most Lewd and Prophane, that made no Pretences at all to Religion, but liv'd in an open Contempt of it, and with the undutiful Son here in the Parable, positively refus'd to be ty'd up to the stiff Rules of it, were in a more hopeful Condition than they; and when the Heat of Youth was over, or they smarted for their Folly

Folly (as the Prodigal Son did) by Sickness or Want, or had their Consciences awakned by some Rousing Discourses, or the like; They might probably come to themselves, and Repent, and return to their Duty: But the other had too much of the Devil in their Temper to be made true Converts; and were much more likely to turn Atheists (if they were not so already) than good Christians.

Indeed, nothing is more Incurable than an inveterate Hypocrisy; and nothing will sooner cause, it than contenting ones self with the outward formalities and shews of Religion, without fixing a true feeling Sense of it in our Hearts. This will in time bring us to have numb'd and stupid Consciences, which hardly any thing will affect but the Hour of Death, or the Day of Judgment, and then 'twill be too late. And 'tis so provoking a Piece of *Mockery*, with great Appearance of Devotion and Sincerity to profess to believe in God, and make as if we worshipped him, and promise faithful Service to him, and the like; when after all, we do what we can to dishonour him, and live in direct Opposition to our Faith, and all our solemn Vows and Protestations: That we can't but think it will be highly resented by him, and if he should quite cast us off for it, and give us over to a reprobate

Sense

Sense, an unfeeling Insensibility to every thing that is good, We must lay our Hands upon our Mouths, and confess that 'tis no more than we deserve. Thus much for the Occasion, and true Sense and Meaning of this Parable.

Since therefore our Lord has assured us expressly, that *Except our Righteousness shall exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, we shall in no Case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*, and what sort of Righteousness that is, we have seen but now; since there is very much of that kind of formal unsincere Religion in the World *now* as well as *then*, and 'tis of such dreadful Consequence; and since it will go a great way towards the Cure of this fatal Disease to be thoroughly persuaded that we are deeply infected with it: I shall in Discoursing upon this Parable endeavour to shew;

I. *First*, How too much like the Man's Son we are, who promis'd his Father fair, when he order'd him to go Work in his Vineyard, but yet never went, and thought no more of the Matter; and

II. *Secondly*, How Miserably we shall deceive our selves, if we think fine Shews and fair Promises in Religion will do us any Service, and be accepted of God,

where the Heart is not so deeply impress'd with a Sense of it, as to influence our Lives, and make us intirely obedient to his Will.

I. And *First*, That we are very much like the Man's Son in the Parable, who promis'd his Father fair but did nothing; I'm afraid will appear but too Evident upon an Impartial Examination, into the Profession we make of our *Faith*, and the pretended Performance of our *Duty*, and the Acts of our Religious *Worship* and *Devotion*. In all which Instances, I doubt we shall find more of Formality and Pretence, than of Sincerity and Truth.

To begin with the Profession of our *Faith*; which we very often make with seeming Seriousness and Attention, and the main end of which is to influence our Practice; and yet how very disagreeable to it are our Lives! as if we did not really believe what we profess, only for Fashions sake we say as others do, and concern our selves no farther. Thus, to descend to some particulars.

We daily profess that we believe there is a *God*, that is, if we know and consider what we say, a Being of infinite Perfection, the Eternal Fountain of all other Beings, and who is of unbounded Power, and Knowledg, and Wisdom, and Goodness; the Author of all our Comforts,
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essentially pure and Holy, Just and True, and the like; Now what Influence has this upon our Hearts and Lives? Have we such a Religious Awe upon our Spirits, of this most Holy and Adorable Being, as not to dare, even in our most secret Retirements, to commit a Vile and Wicked Action, being Conscious that we are always in his Divine Presence? Do we lay a Restraint upon our very Thoughts, being perswaded that he knows them? Do we truly love him above all things, as believing him above all things to deserve our Love; and does this Love (as all true Love does) make us sincerely careful to do whatever will be Pleasing to him, and avoid whatever will offend him? Thus we must confess it should be; but is it so? Is it not rather directly to the contrary? Don't we shew by almost all our Actions, that we love the World, and the Gratification of our own Lusts, much better than we do our God? Nay, Don't we too too often by our daring Wickedness, fly in the Face of his Divine Majesty, and joyn with his Grand Enemy in Rebellion against him? And so little Regard have we to his constant Presence with us, and Inspection over us, as to make no scruple of doing such base Things before him, as the Presence of a Child, or the meanest Servant we have,

would cause us to forbear. Now such behaviour as this, is so wholly inconsistent with a sincere belief of a *God*; that it Demonstrates the Profession of such Belief, how fair and specious soever, to be very little better than a bare *pretence*.

But further, We Profess to believe in *Jesus Christ* our Blessed Lord and Saviour, who underwent most bitter Sufferings, and died a most painful Ignominious Death, to atone for our Sins, and save us from the endless Punishment of them; and rose again for our Justification, and ascended into Heaven to prepare Mansions of Glory for his faithful Disciples; and will at last come with Power and great Glory to enquire into every Mans whole course of Life, and render to every one according to it, and receive the Righteous into Life and Happiness Eternal, but banish the Wicked into everlasting Misery. Now, one would think a firm Belief of such Great and Concerning Things as these, should give a mighty Turn to our Lives; and make us all over Love and Obedience to our great Deliverer, and who hereafter will be our Impartial Judge, and upon the Sentence of whose Mouth will depend our Happiness or Ruin to Eternal Ages.

Methinks we should make it above all things our great Care to Conform to the most Wise and Good Methods of Reconciliation.

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ciliation to God which he hath set us, and exactly to perform the Conditions that he our great Mediator hath made necessary in order to our being Partakers of the Merit of his Blood. And nothing should we abhor, and shun so much, as the Commission of those Sins which were the Cause of all his Agonies; and which for any Christian to be fond of, will Crucifie him a-fresh, and again put him to an open Shame, and pierce his Heart, deeper than the Spear of the barbarous *Centurion*. We should rather make it our resolute Endeavour to suffer Sin no longer to Domineer it in us, who are now our Redeemer's purchased Possession, and therefore in all Reason, ought to *Glorify him in our Bodies and our Spirits, which are his*. Thus should we die unto Sin, and with him arise unto a New and Holy Life; and ascend to Heaven with him upon the Wings of Love and Devotion, despising the present World with the Vanities and Follies of it, and have our Conversation above, as becomes Followers of so Divine a Master, and that have so inestimable a Treasure laid up for us in Heaven.

And since we look for a Resurrection of our dead Bodies to an eternal Duration in a State of most exquisite Bliss or Woe, according as our Behaviour has been in this first Life; Methinks we

should walk here with the greatest Circumspection imaginable, as those that must give a strict account of every step they take, and have every Thought and Word as well as Work brought into Judgment, that so we may be prepared to give up our Accounts with Joy. Such, one would think, should be the effect of a real Belief of a future State, and a Day of strict Scrutiny and Just Recompence at the close of all things.

But alas! with the most of us, how much is it otherwise! How little Sign of a Hearty Perswasion that these things are so? For instead of walking circumspectly, we live at Random; instead of having an awful Sense of the great Day of Account, and making due provision for it, we put the thoughts of that evil Day far from us, and go on in our Impieties as if 'twould never come. All our Contrivance, and all our Endeavours are employed upon *this* Life, as if here only we had Hope, and this were our Home, the only place of our abode; and as Improvident are we for the Life to come, and as loath to part witht his, as if here were our *All*, and when we went from hence we should be no more.

How does this suit with a Belief of a Resurrection of the Body, and everlasting Life in another Spiritual World?

Thus

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Thus we see, as to *these* great Articles of our *Belief*, our Profession of *Faith* is but little more than an empty Sound ; and it might too easily be made Appear so, as to all the rest.

So that, in this *First* Instance, (and which is the Ground-work of all) we are too much like the Man's Son in the Parable, who put his Father off only with a few good Words ; being as little *Influenced* by the Faith we profess, as if we believed quite contrary.

Let us now enquire, whether our plausible Pretences to Christian *Obedience* are of a better kind or no ; and I'm afraid we shall find as great Insincerity here, as before, and that like the *Pharisees* we promise much, and Pretend to a great deal, and yet *do* but little or nothing.

For *First* in general, Whereas we have over and over Promised and Vowed, to keep *All* God's Holy Will and Commandments, and walk in the same *All* the Days of our Life, we Pay him at best but a *Partial* Obedience ; and make bold to pick and choose out of his Laws what is most agreeable to our Temper and Complexion, and so, least Difficult, and which we have least Temptation or Desire, to break ; and think by our Performance of those Duties, to Compound for our Neglect or Breach of the rest. And even *this* Obe-

dience, as little worth as it is, is only by Fits and Starts, and great Interruptions, and looks more like the ebbs and flows of a Disease than the Service of a Man, and a Christian, to his Creator and Redeemer. And after all, if the Truth were known, (as God certainly knows it, tho' Men it may be do not) 'tis but a piece of Hypocrisy, a Way we use to get Credit and Reputation, in order to some secular Ends and Designs, which can't be carried on so well without it. Thus much in general; which whether it be true or no, and how far it is so, every Man's own Conscience will tell him.

But to press this Matter Home, I shall single out two or three particular Instances of our Duty, and those of greatest Moment, and enquire in what Manner we pay Obedience to them.

1. The First shall be *Charity to the Poor and Needy*, than which nothing is more earnestly urg'd upon us in Scripture, and which our Lord has told us shall be more particularly enquir'd into at the Day of Judgment: And what more is there in this for the generality, than a little *Empty Pity*, when that which is needful for the Relief of their Necessities, is unnaturally withheld? Those that are a Step above these, and do give something, how seldom is it according to the Ability that God

God has given them; how *Grudgingly and as of Necessity*, rather than cheerfully and with a ready Mind? and how often is the Charity of more liberal Persons misapplied, and thoughtlessly scattered among Vagrants and Counterfeits, such as should be sent to the House of Correction rather than have an Alms; and which if collected into a Sum, and bestowed discreetly, would cheer the Hearts of many that indeed deserve Compassion?

So that Obedience to this great Duty, comes very short of what might be expected from true Disciples of the most compassionate Jesus; and tho' we often meet with a *Shew* of it, yet a substantial *thorough* Charity is very rare.

2. Secondly, *Forgiveness of Injuries*, is another Duty of our Holy Religion, of the highest Importance, for upon our sincere Performance of it depends our own Forgiveness at the Hands of God. For so our Lord expressly, *If ye forgive Men their Trespases, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not Men their Trespases, neither will your Father forgive your Trespases.* And yet, how little is there of it in the World! How few rise higher, (and that for the sake of good Breeding oftentimes more than of Religion) than to be outwardly Fair and Civil to such as

have

Mat. 6. 14,

15.

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have done them an Injury, while their
Hearts at the same time are full of Ran-
cour and Revenge? It may be they may
faintly say to a Good Man that would
make Peace, *God forgive them, for I do*;
but if a Favourable Opportunity happens
the next Minute, all this shall be forgot,
and Revenge take place.

Some are for the Hellish Distinction,
of *forgiving* but not *forgetting*; but this
signifies no more, than that I'll pretend to
forgive till it lies in my Power to requite,
and then I'll glut my Malice to the full.

But is this to forgive one another *as*
Eph. 4. 32. God for Christ's sake hath for-
given us? What can be a great-
er piece of Mockery than to pretend at
this rate to obey this great Command,
which indeed is directly to Transgress it,
only we give it another name.

3. Thirdly, And to mention no more,
Repentance, (tho' it infinitely Concerns
us to be sincere in it, for otherwise we
shall for ever Perish, yet) as we usually
manage it, hath as much of Deceit in it, and
as little of Reality, as any thing besides.

For instead of a deep Sorrow, and
Pungent Remorse for Sin, Productive of
an intire Hatred of it, and thorough
change of Life, 'tis seldom any more than
a faint Sigh or Two, a formal lifting up
our Hands and Eyes, and saying, *Lord*
have

have Mercy upon us, in a more mournful Tone than ordinary, and a heedless unaffectionate Repetition of some penitential Expressions, to the Sense of which we attend but little.

Perhaps at Two or Three more solemn times of the Year, we vouchsafe to look into our Breasts, and call to mind some of our past Wickednesses, and it may be are something more in earnest than we use to be, and seem to be resolved to reform for the future; when no sooner is the good time over, but all's forgot again, and we soon grow as bad as ever.

Some are for repenting when they are good for nothing else, when they are Old, and Sick, and Decrepid, and upon their Death-Beds; any time but the Present is with them the most seasonable, and every thing must take place before God and Religion, and the making a good Provision for their Immortal Souls. Good God! that ever Men should dare to Trifle thus with things of such infinite Consequence! and yet, how seldom do we find one that goes farther and Repents in earnest! I might mention many more Instances wherein we are as faulty as in these; But this is enough to give us a Sense of our great Insincerity in the Performance of our Duty, and how provokingly we mock God, and fatally deceive our
selves,

selves, by resting in empty Pretences, and a few Good Words, without that Honest hearty Obedience, which alone God will Accept and Reward.

Proceed we now, to make one Inquiry more, namely, into the Nature of our Religious *Worship and Devotion*; and see whether this is not of a Piece with the rest, as meer a Formality, and specious Nothing.

As for our Religious *Worship*, or those outward Expressions of Reverence to God, which are generally made use of in our Publick Religious Assemblies; how very seldom is there a Correspondent Awe, and inward Veneration of that Divine Being upon our Minds!

How often do we bow our Bodies low, in the Places of his more especial Presence; when our Hearts at the same time refuse to be humbled before him! How often do we lift up our Hands and Eyes towards Heaven; when all the while our Souls are Groveling in the Dust, and taken up with Vain and Worldly Thoughts, and but too often defiled with Impure Imaginations! How often do we pay Reverence at the Mention of the Name of *Jesus*, and kneel before him like Good Subjects, and Humble Supplicants; and yet live like incorrigible and stubborn Rebels!

Our

Our Devotion likewise is too often of the same vile stamp. For how often do we *draw near to him with our Lips, when our Hearts, our Affections, and our very Thoughts too, are far from him!* How seldom do we give that due Attention we ought, to the Sense of those Petitions we pretend to offer up to him; and how cold and unconcerned are when we repeat them, and huddle them over with equal Irreverence and Inadvertency! Particularly, in what a Shameless, Remorseless Manner, do too many of us confess our heinous Sins, before the Holy and Almighty God; How little touch'd are we with a Sense of our Infinite Baseness, Vileness, and Ingratitude, and of that heavy Displeasure of God which we have incurr'd! Indeed, it looks more like the telling a Story, and relating some indifferent Matters of Fact, that but little concern us, than a guilty self-condemned Wretch's Humble and Penitent Acknowledgment of Crimes of the deepest Dye, before a most Just and Holy Judge, who is able to punish him with Eternal Death; And when we beg for Pardon and Mercy, how faintly do we do it, as if we were not much concerned whether 'twere granted or no! And when Absolution is pronounced upon the truly Penitent, by those whom the compassionate Jesus hath com-

commissioned to do it; how little are we affected with that, which should rejoyce us above all things in the World! And when we beg for the greatest of Blessings, the Graces and Assistances of the Holy Spirit, in order to our walking before God to all well-pleasing; we do it in such a heedless careless Manner, with so little Warmth and Importunity, as if we thought them scarce worth much Entreaty; and not near so valuable as a considerable Addition to our Fortunes, which we sollicite for when there is Occasion, with much more Life and Spirit, and earnestness than we say our Prayers.

How frozen too, (to our Shame be it spoken) are our Affections when we pretend to return Thanks to our great Benefactor, for his Constant Tender Care over us, and the many Wonderful Expressions of his Love, especially in the amazing Instance of our Redemption by the Death and Sufferings of his Eternal Son; which yet is of infinitely more value to us than a Thousand Worlds! And when we approach that Holy Table, where our dear Lord is sensibly set before us as Crucified for us, and are made Partakers of his most precious Body and Blood, and should be Inflamed with the highest pitch of Love and Gratitude, and Praise at the Remembrance of his bitter Agonies for our sakes, and

and the Happy Consequence of them, and likewise full of Shame and Sorrow for our Sins, and of firm Resolutions, of doing so Wickedly no more for ever; even during the Performance of this most solemn part of Christian Worship and Devotion, How Cold, and Lifeless are we! how hard do we find it to keep up the Holy Flame till the Ministration is over; and how soon do we forget all the sacred Obligations we then laid upon ourselves, and grow as Vain and Worldly, and it may be as Vicious as ever!

And as our Prayers are thus Heartless, and void of true Devotion; so is our Attention to the Word of God more in Appearance than Reality. We seldom consider it as the great Rule and Measure of our Actions, and make it our chief Study as that which will make us Wise to Salvation, and according to which we shall be Judg'd at the great Day of Recompence; But out of Custom or Curiosity, we sometimes spend an Hour that Way, and pass our Judgment with Freedom enough upon what the Preacher has said, and make it a matter of a little talk; and there's an End. And if at any time we are touch'd and awakened with a warm affectionate Perswasive to Good Life, and for a while lay it to Heart, and purpose to do accordingly; How soon does

does Business or Pleasure drive all out again, and leave us very much the same we were before!

So that without more Words upon a thing so evident, 'tis plain that both our Faith and our Obedience, our Worship and our Devotion, have too often more of Appearance than Reality: and tho' we make a fair shew in all these Instances, and with the Man's Son in the Parable give Good Words, and profess and Promise much; yet very little is done that will effectually recommend us to our heavenly Father's Favour and Acceptance.

Indeed, the *Best* Men are not without their Infirmities, and cannot be always alike Warm and Vigorous and Attentive in God's Service; and sometimes bodily Indispositions and Distempers, may cause great Numbness and Confusion, Wanderings and Unsteadyness in the Religious Exercises of a very sincere Christian. But then, this is not frequent, nor is it suffered to continue long; much less are they easy and unconcerned at their Coolness, and Remissness in their Duty; but rather heartily Bewail and Lament, and Pray, and Strive against it, and endeavour to make up with double Diligence and Fervour for the future, what has formerly been wanting. Still there is such a Principle of sincere Religion within, as gets
Ground

Ground of every thing that hinders and opposes it ; tho' it be slowly and not without difficulty , and a constant Circumspection.

But he whose Religion is made up of Formality, Glozing, and Fawning upon God with Words and Gestures of the highest Veneration, and that Promise an intire Obedience ; when yet, those Theatrical Nothings are his *All*, and he concerns himself no farther: This is the *Pharisaical* Christian, whom our Lord in this Parable condemns.

II. The next thing to be done is to shew, How highly displeasing to God such a Religion must needs be as we have now described, and how miserably we shall deceive our selves, if we think fine Shews and fair Promises will be accepted of him; without intire Obedience to his Will, proceeding from Integrity of Heart.

For besides, that this is rank *Hypocrisy* and *Diffimulation*, than which nothing is more abominable to the God of Truth, and which our Lord has more sharply inveighed against, and more severely Threatned than any thing besides, and for which there can be nothing offered in excuse ; besides this, it implies the most base and unworthy Apprehensions of God, as if he were apt to be pleased and won upon by the outward Ceremonies of Ado-

ration and Worship, and lov'd to see his his Vassals Cringe and Prostrate themselves before him, and give him glorious Titles, and complement him highly; and if this were but done Regularly and Constantly, and with much of Shew and Ostentation, he would dispence with the want of inward Purity of Heart, and that which is true Holiness of Life.

And what does this imply, but that we dont take him to hate Iniquity with so perfect an Hatred as he says he does; or else, that we think he is so short sighted as not to be able to discover the Iniquity through the Counterfeit Veil of Religion that we throw over it; or else that he is so fondly taken up with the Pageantry of our outward Services, as not to be at Leisure to look into the Recesses of our Hearts? Or if we believe that he can and does see to the bottom of our Pretences, and discovers the Cheat, (as most certainly he does,) we must, if we dare still to go on in it, either believe that he is Impotent and cannot Punish it, or else (with *Epicurus*) that he is a God wholly employ'd in enjoying the Happiness of his own Heaven, and utterly regardless of the Affairs of this lower World. And what can be more Hateful and Provoking, than a Religion that implies, and proceeds upon, such Notions of God as these!

And

And tho' Perhaps we may not actually think in this Vile manner of him, yet 'twill be all one in his sight as if we did. For he hath all along exprefly declared fo in both Testaments, and that nothing will be acceptable to him, but rather his utter Aversion, without Sincerity and Purity of Mind; and an Honest Endeavour to regulate all our Actions according to the Rule that he hath fet us.

Thus to begin with what is faid to this Purpose in the 50th *Pfalm*; where God is brought in, thus speaking to the People of *Israel*. *I will not — v. 8.*
reprove thee for thy Sacrifices or thy burnt Offerings, because they were not continually before me. Will I eat the Flesh of Bulls or drink the Blood of Goats? No, offer unto God Thanksgiving, and Pay thy Vows unto the most High. But unto the Wicked, saith God; what hast thou to do to declare my Statutes, and that thou shouldst take my Covenant into thy Mouth, seeing thou hatest to be reform'd, and hast cast my Words behind thee? Whoso Offereth me Thanks and Praise he honoureth me, and to him that ordereth his Conversation aright, will I shew the Salvation of God. And in the next *Pfalm*, 16, 17. *Ver.* After David had bewailed his Wickedness in the Matter of *Uriah*, he tells God, *Thou desirest not Sacrifice, else would I give it thee; thou de-*

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lightest not in Burnt-offerings. The Sacri-
fices of God are a Broken Spirit; a Broken
and a Contrite Heart, O God! thou wilt
not Despise,

And the Words of the Evangelical
Prophet are very remarkable to this Pur-
pose, *Isa. 1. 10, &c. Hear the Word of the*
Lord, ye Rulers of Sodom; give Ear unto
the Law of our God, ye People of Gomor-
rah (i. e.) ye that are like those accursed
Cities in your wicked Practices; To what
Purpose is the Multitude of your Sacrifices un-
to me, saith the Lord?

I am full, or Cloy'd or Nauseated, with
the Burnt-offerings of Rams, and fat of fed
Beasts; I delight not in the Blood of Bullocks
or of Lambs, or of He-Goats. Bring no
more vain Oblations; Incense is an Abomi-
nation unto me; the New Moons and Sab-
baths, the calling of Assemblies I cannot a
way with, it is Iniquity, even the solema
Meeting. And when ye spread forth your
Hands I will hide mine Eyes from you, yea,
when ye make many Prayers I will not hear.
And what was the Reason of all this? not
an absolute dislike of those Rites them-
selves, for he had enjoyn'd the People strict-
ly to observe them; but 'twas because of

their great Wickedness, Your
v. 15, *Hands are filled with Blood, ye*
are Guilty of Murder, and which
is next door to it, Cruel Oppression of
the

the Widow and the Fatherless, which were Sins that cry'd aloud for Vengeance, and turn'd all their

outward Shews of Worship into an Abomination. And therefore saith the Prophet, in the Name of God, *Wash ye, make ye clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine Eyes; Cease to do Evil, Learn to do Well; seek Judgment, relieve the Oppressed, Judge the Fatherless, plead for the Widow.* Come now, after the Performance of this, and we will reason together, saith the Lord; this is the only way to appease my Anger, and if ye sincerely take this Course, tho' your Sins be as Scarlet, they shall be white as Snow; tho' they be red like Crimson, they shall be as Wool. —17.

To which Purpose too is that Passage, in the 66th of *Isai.* 3. *He that killeth an Ox is as if he slew a Man: He that sacrificeth a Lamb, is as if he cut off a Dogs Neck: He that offereth an Oblation, as if he offered Swines Blood: He that burneth Incense as if he bless'd an Idol; and why? because they have chosen their own Ways, and their Soul delighteth in their Abominations.* But upon this Man *Isa. 66. 2.* will I look graciously, even upon him that is of a Poor and contrite Spirit, and trembleth, or is Inwardly, and Deeply affected, at my Word.

And agreeably says the Prophet *Amos*, Ch. 5. 21, 22. *I hate, I despise your Feast-days; tho' ye offer me Burnt-offerings I will not accept them, neither will I regard the Peace-offerings of your Fat Beasts; but let Judgment run down as Waters, and Righteousness as a mighty Stream.* And *Micah*, very elegantly and Pathetically, Ch. 6. 6, 7, 8. *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with Burnt Offerings, and with Calves of a Year old? Will the Lord be pleased with Thousands of Rams, or with Ten Thousands of Rivers of Oyl? Shall I give my first born for my Transgression, the Fruit of my Body for the Sin of my Soul? He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is Good, and what of all things will be most acceptable to him; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with God?*

Thus we see, God hath all along declared by his Prophets, and that even during the Old Covenant, when Rites and Ceremonies were so much insisted on, so strictly injoynd and so to a tittle to be observ'd; even *then*, when People look'd no further than this, which was indeed but the Shell and Surface of Religion, and took no Care of the Precepts of Moral Righteousness, and Purity of Mind; We see, He plainly declares, that all outward

Ob.

Observances will be of no Avail, but rather provoke him still more, unless attended with true Holiness of Life.

And nothing can be more plain and express in this matter, than the New Testament is. Which tells us that the Great Design of our Lord's coming into the World was to introduce an Internal Spiritual Religion; and St. Paul says expressly, *that he gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity.* And our Blessed Saviour in all his Discourses, presses the necessity of sincere inward Holiness upon us, or which is the same thing, purity of Heart and Life. This was the Design of his whole Sermon on the Mount, and several of his Parables, particularly this before us; and he never was so severe as in denouncing Woes upon Woes to the Hypocritical Scribes and Pharisees, Men to all Appearance of great Strictness, and Sanctity, and Zeal; but yet *within* full of Extortion, and Excess, and all Iniquity, and who did all their Works out of Pride and Vain Glory, to be seen and admired of Men. With such Wretches as these our Meek Lord himself seems to have no Patience, and breaths nothing towards them but Damnation, and that even greater than ordinary, in the sad Portion of Hypocrites, where is

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weeping and wailing and gnashing of
Teeth for ever.

'Tis needless to shew how exactly the
Blessed Apostles agree with their great
Master in this matter, (and they would
be no true Apostles of his if they did not)
and all along in their Writings urge upon
us true undissembled Holiness, as we
Heb. 12. 14. hope ever to see and enjoy our
Lord in Heaven.

So that quite throughout the Bible,
'tis very evident that a hearty sincere
Obedience to the eternal Law of Right-
teousness, is that which God expects
from us, if we would please him and re-
cover his Favour; that outward Expres-
sions of Reverence for him, when void
of inward Piety, and a Good Life, is the
most hateful Thing to him in the World,
and no other than an Impious Piece of
Mockery which he will most severely
Punish.

Let no Man therefore think to put God
off, as the Idle Son here in the *Parable*
did his Father, with specious Professions
of Duty, and fair Promises of Obedi-
ence, without Performance; *Lest the Pub-
licans and Harlots go into the Kingdom of
God before him,* and after all his high Pre-
tences, his dismal Lot be in the Portion
of Hypocrites.

Be not deceived, God is not Mocked; for whatsoever a Man ^{Cal. 6. 7.} sows, that shall he also reap; and according to the Nature of Men's Religion, such shall their Reward be at last. If it be only Husk and Shell, and Outside, it shall, like the Field of the Sluggard, bring forth nothing but *Thorns and Nettles*; the stinging Upbraidings of a Guilty Conscience, Great Disquietude and Perplexity of Mind, in this World, and Ten thousand times worse hereafter. And 'tis only a real Substantial Piety that brings forth plenty of good Works here, that shall, or indeed *can* be Recompensed with Eternal Glory above.

For can any Man in his Senses be so Weak and Besotted, as to think that the saying a few Words by Heart, the Repetition of a set number of Prayers, the going to Church, and using such and such Postures and Gestures there, which a *Parrot* and a *Monkey* may be taught to say and do as orderly as he; Can any Man think that this alone, will be a sufficient Preparation for the pure Joys of Heaven? Will this alone make his Soul of an Angelical and Godlike Temper, or can he think that he can ever be Happy even in Heaven it self without it? Is there such an irresistible Charm, in the bare Repetition

tion of a Penitential Form, as immediately to change the Soul throughout, and of Vile and Devilish, to make it fit for the Converse of Saints and Angels, and of God himself? Is there such strange Force in the bare Words of every Prayer we say, as if we do but run 'em over, tho' at never so heedless a Rate, they shall presently storm Heaven, and infallibly bring down whatever Graces and Blessings were expressed by them, (I don't say *Desired*, for that they too seldom are or very coolly at best) and without any more to do, give the Mock Supplicants Possession of them, and make them Good and Holy whether they will or no? Strange Delusion! That ever a Rational Creature should give Credit to such Impossibilities as these!

Wherefore to shut up all in a Word or Two.

If what has been discoursed upon this *Parable* be true, and any Man's Conscience smites him, and says, *Thou art the Man* that Mockest thy God, and deceivest thy own Soul by a Religion that has little or nothing in it but Formality, and an empty Appearance, which, how fair soever, will signify nothing at the Day of Judgment, unless it be to encrease thy Damnation; if thou art this wretched Creature, and what has been said may

justly

justly be applied to thee; then it concerns thee to Consider, and revolve it seriously in thy Mind, heartily to Bewail and Lament thy former Insincerity and Disobedience, and to take all possible Care that it be so no more for ever.

And as for those that are so Happy, as not to be Guilty in this Matter, and their Consciences clear them from this Charge, and bear them Witness that *in Simplicity and Godly Sincerity, they have had their Conversation in the World*; Let them give God the Praise, and go on in their good way, and be always upon their Guard, lest at any time they be surpriz'd by the subtil Tempter, and fall from their Integrity and Stedfastness; for *in due time they shall reap, if they faint not.*

The PRAYER.

I.

AND thou most Holy God! To whom all Hearts are open, all Desires and Designs are known, and from whom no Secrets are hid; who requirest Truth in the Inner-parts, and to whom sincere Obedience is more acceptable than the most costly Sacrifice and all the

So.

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Solemnities of outward Worship: Create in
me a Clean, an Honest and Good Heart, and
Renew a Right Spirit within me! And may I
never rest in a specious Profession of Religion,
and satisfy my self with empty Pretences,
and a fair Appearance; but make it my great
Endeavour to recommend my self to thy Fa-
vour by a constant Performance of all Christi-
an Duty. I have the greatest Reason to be
sensible, that without thy gracious Assistance,
I can neither believe nor do aright; O there-
fore do thou so enliven and increase my
Faith, that it may influence my Affections,
and work by Love! That it may enable me
to overcome the World, and resist all its Temp-
tations and Allurements, with Constancy and
Courage; and with unwearied Diligence to
press on in my Christian Course, with Pati-
ence and firm Hope, of endless Rest and Joy,
in thy Eternal Kingdom!

II.

For ever preserve me, I beseech thee, from
the impious Mockery, of a dissembled Rever-
ence in thy Service, and counterfeit Devoti-
on; and grant that all my Addresses to thee,
whether in Publick or in Private, may be
animated with true Piety of Heart. That
every Petition, and Act of Praise may flow
from a Soul intirely devoted to thee; and
full of Holy Love, and humble Expectation,
of all needful Blessings, from thy Inexhausti-
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ble Goodness. That so, these Sacred Duties being never polluted by Vain-Glory, or any worldly Aim, but purely designed for thy Honour and the Relief of my own Necessities and Wants; they may be graciously accepted by thee, and answered, as thy Infinite Wisdom shall see most expedient for me!

And may I so deeply, and so earnestly repent of what I have hitherto been Guilty of upon this account; as immediately, and with the utmost Seriousness and Application, to endeavour after the Power of Godliness for the time to come! That so thou mayst be inclin'd to Pity and to Pardon me, and receive me again to thy Favour, thro' the Merits and Intercession of thy Divine Son, my ever blessed Saviour, Jesus! Amen, Amen.

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PARA-

P A R A B L E IV.

Of the Wicked Husband-Men.

Mat. xxi. 33, &c.

*There was a certain Householder which Plant-
ed a Vineyard, and hedged it round about,
and Dig'd a Wine-press in it, and built a
Tower, and let it out to Husbandmen, and
went into a far Country.*

*And when the Time of the Fruits drew near,
he sent his Servants to the Husbandmen,
that they might receive the Fruits of it.*

*And the Husbandmen took his Servants, and
beat one, and killed another, and stoned
another.*

*Again he sent other Servants more than the
first, and they did unto them likewise.*

*But last of all he sent unto them his Son, say-
ing, They will reverence my Son.*

*But when the Husbandmen saw the Son, they
said among themselves, This is the Heir,
Come, let us kill him, and let us seize on
his Inheritance.*

*And they caught him, and cast him out of
the Vineyard, and slew him.*

*When the Lord therefore of the Vineyard com-
eth, What will he do unto those Husband-
men?*

They

Vol.II. Parables of our Blessed Saviour. III

They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those Wicked Men, and will let out his Vineyard unto other Husbandmen which shall render him the Fruits in their Seasons.

OUR Lord's Design in this Parable, was to convince the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, and chief Rulers of the *Jews*, of the base and most provoking Returns they and their Predecessors for a long time had made to God, for those many extraordinary Blessings and Favours he had vouchsafed to that Church and Nation above all other People in the World; and to reprove them for it in such a manner, as to make them condemn *themselves*, as they did *V. 41*, and with their own Mouths confess the Justice of the severest Punishments that God should think fit to lay upon them, for such intolerable Wickedness and Ingratitude. And in discoursing upon it, we will

First, Briefly explain the several Parts of it, and apply it to our selves; and then

Secondly, Make some more particular Improvement of the *37th Verse*, Last of all he sent unto them his Son. And

First, for the *Explication* of the Parable.

There

There was a certain Householder, he tells them, *which planted a Vineyard*; by which he meant God's making choice of the Posterity of *Abraham* for his peculiar People, and forming them into a Church and Nation, which should be under his particular Care and Direction; and to whom he himself gave Laws both relating to the Good Government of the State, as being their *King*, and to his own Worship, as their *God*. And those Laws were so excellent, (as they must needs be, being framed by the only wise God) that *Moses* might well say as he does, *Deut. 4. 8.* *What Nation is there so great, that hath Statutes and Judgments so Righteous, as all this Law which I set before you this Day?*

After he had thus *planted* his Vineyard; to secure it from Injuries, *he Hedged it round about*. That is, his watchful Providence did in an extraordinary manner Defend and Guard that People from their Enemies, whom he had driven out before 'em by his Almighty Power; and by the same Power kept 'em in quiet Possession of that Good Land, *that fruitful*
Ch. 5. 1. *Hill*, as *Isaiah* calls it, which he won for them by his Out-stretched Arm, and which without a miraculous Restraint upon the Neighbouring Nations must have fallen again into their Hands,

Hands, when thrice a Year all their Males by the command of God appeared before him at *Jerusalem*; *Ex. 34. 23.* and consequently their Country was left naked and exposed to every Aggressor. But to prevent their Fears, and encourage their Obedience, and give them a sensible Demonstration of his peculiar Protection; he assured them that no Man should then so much as *Desire* their Land, and the Event shewed it to be amazingly True for many Years.

Having thus Planted, and wonderfully Provided for the Security of his Vineyard, *He digged a Winepress in it, and built a Tower.* By the former is meant God's furnishing them with whatever was requisite to their full Instruction in his Blessed Will, and to urge it home upon them, and move them effectually to observe and do it; that so if they were Unfruitful, or their Fruit did not come to Perfection, and they did not enjoy the cheering Effects of Obedience in their own Consciences, and the Favour and Blessing of God upon them for it; the Blame must be wholly their own. And as for the *Tower* that was Built in it, it may signify either literally the City of *Jerusalem*, where was plac'd the chief Throne of Judgment, and the magnificent

cent Temple there, to which all the Tribes of *Israel* were to resort, to perform their most Solemn Religious Worship, as in the Place of God's more especial Presence; whereby both a free Course of Civil Justice was preserv'd, and likewise Unity and Uniformity in Religion, which are the great *Support*, as well as the *Glory* of a Church and Nation: Or it may signify that Church's being Defended and Maintained by the *Secular Arm*, whereby it was protected against the Insults of wicked Men, and grew and flourished under the tender Care and Safeguard of the *Government*; which in so degenerate a World as this, is necessary to the outward Prosperity and Peace of any Church.

Now when all things were put into this excellent Order, and the Vineyard made ready to be Dress'd and Cultivated, and nothing but *that* wanting in order to its bringing forth Fruit for *Him* by whom it was planted; The Great Lord of it *Let it out to Husbandmen, and went into a far Country*. That is, He Intrusted this his Favourite Plantation, about which he had taken such extraordinary Care, to those whose particular Business it should be to look well after it, and do what was needful to its making a Good Return, *viz.* The *Priests* and *Levites*, and *Scribes*, and *Rulers*, who had a Share in the Management

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ment of the Affairs of that Church to the Honour of its Divine Founder, and the Publick Good. And then, he left things to go on, according to the Measures he had prescrib'd, 'till he should think fit to Enquire after the Improvement they had made, and see what his Vineyard produced.

And when the Time of the Fruit drew near, he sent his Servants to the Husbandmen, that they might receive the Fruits of it. By the *Servants* here, is meant the *Prophets*, those extraordinary Ministers of God, whom he sent to that People to remind them of their Duty when they began to forget it, to reprove them for their Iniquities, and denounce God's Judgments against them, if they did not speedily Appease his Anger by Repentance and Amendment: And likewise for the Encouragement of those that were truly Good, to foretel what wonderful Instances of Favour and Mercy he design'd for them in the latter Ages; and not for them only, but for all the World, that would comply with those gracious Conditions he should require in order to it.

But the unwelcome Freedom these Servants of God took with all Degrees of Men from the Highest to the Lowest, in exposing their Faults, Upbraiding them for their Ingratitude, and the ill Return they

made to the Great Author of all their Blessings and Comforts, and who had been so peculiarly Kind and Good to them above all other People; and withal plainly telling them what would be the sad Consequence of this at last; this, tho' they evidently shew'd their Divine Commission for doing it, did so enrage those who rather should have been humbled by it, that they took those Servants of God, *and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another*; us'd 'em most barbarously, as if they were the greatest Malefactors, who yet came for no worse Purpose than to prevent their Ruine.

Thus our Lord Pathetically expostulates with them, *Mat. 23. 37. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Thou that killest the Prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, upon this Merciful Errand; How often would I have gathered thy Children together even as a Hen gathereth her Chickens under her Wings, but ye would not! Behold your House is left unto you desolate.* And

Act. 7. 52.

St. Stephen, agreeably in his cutting Discourse to the Jews, *Which of the Prophets, says he, have not your Fathers persecuted? and they have Slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just one of whom ye have been now the Betrayers and Murderers*; By which he exasperated them so bitterly against him, that as their

Father

Fathers did, so did they, and with furious Rage, *Gnash'd upon him with their Teeth, and stopped their Ears* against any that should Disswade 'em from their Cruel Purpose, *and cast him out of the City and stoned him*: swelling thereby that Stream of Righteous Blood still higher, *which had been shed upon the Earth* *Mat. 23.35.* *from the Blood of Righteous Abel*

until then; and adding to the Cry it made to Heaven for Vengeance, upon that most Wicked Generation, which in so provoking a manner made such haste to fill up the Measure of their Fathers Iniquities.

But so great was the Long-suffering of God towards those Wicked Husbandmen, who not only neglected their Duty to his Vineyard, but treated his Servants so inhumanly, who came to advise them better; that *he again sent other Servants more than the first*, (as the Prophets were more numerous in the Times that were nearest to the coming of the Messias, like so many Harbingers to prepare the way before him) to try if that his Goodness would lead them to Repentance. But instead of making this Right Use of it, they grew more vile and hardned than ever, (as is evident from what *Malachi* charges them with, who was the last Prophet that was sent to them) and dealt as ill by those Servants, as they had done

by the first; and thereby, one would have thought, *had Treasured up Wrath*, without any further Interposal of Mercy *against the Day of Wrath, and Revelation of the Righteous Judgment of God*. Yet, notwithstanding all these Provocations, which nothing but Infinite Goodness would have born so long; he crowns all with an Amazing Act of Condescension, and as the last offer of his Favour, and highest Expression of his Kindness to them,

and earnest desire of their Happiness, *He sent unto them his only, his well-beloved Son, saying, they will reverence him when they see him; and hearken to his Instructions and Reproofs, and be inclined by him to render the acceptable Fruits of Holiness to their Great Lord.*

And if so much Goodness, and Sweetness of Temper, so many admirable Discourses, back'd with so many amazing and Beneficial Miracles, and such unblameable Holiness of Life; if all this which shone with so great Lustre in the blessed Jesus, even thro' the mean Veil of his Humanity, and bespoke him to be the Son of the most High God, as well as the Son of Man: if all this would not create the Profoundest Reverence of his Person, mixed with the most Ardent Love, and produce the most ready and

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intire Obedience to every thing that he should enjoyn, 'twould be wonderfully strange indeed.

What shall I do? says the great Lord of the Vineyard, when the Husbandmen had so cruelly handled all the Servants he had sent to them; *What shall I do?* as if he was at a stand what farther Course to take with them, to reduce them to a better Mind. And then, as his last Reserve, the only way left to do it, and which in all likelihood could not miss of Success; he resolves to send his *Son*, whom he thought they could not choose but *Reverence*; and whose winning Behaviour, joyn'd with his high Authority, would not fail to bring them to Repentance and their Duty.

But instead of this, so great was the Perverseness and Obstinacy of these Wicked People, *when they saw the Son*, so far were they from giving him such a Reception as was due to the Heir of the great King of Heaven and Earth; that they consulted together, and *said among themselves, this is the Heir, come let us kill him, and let us seize on his Inheritance.* That is, tho' the Jewish Priests and Rulers had reason to believe that the Blessed Jesus was the expected Messias, from the Completion of ancient Prophecies in him, and from his convincing Discourses, and a-

mazing Miracles, and could not withhold an inward Assent to his being so; yet the Meanness of his outward Appearance, the purity of his Doctrine, preaching up Self-denial and Poverty of Spirit, &c. and declaring that his Kingdom was not of this World: This was so contrary to their Pride and Ambition, and Sensuality, that they were resolved not to confess it, but rather to *Dispatch* him out of Hand, that they might quietly enjoy that State, and Wealth, and Honour, which they were then in Possession of, and prefer'd before all that Christ could bestow upon them in Heaven.

And accordingly, (as our Lord spoke Prophetically of his Death, and the manner of it) they proceeded to execute what they had plotted against him, *and caught him and cast him out of the Vineyard, and slew him*: Embrewing their vile Hands in the most Sacred and Innocent Blood that ever was.

But whatever fond Hopes they might have of securing to themselves by this Means, their Worldly Pomp and Greatness; this most Unjust, Ungrateful, and barbarous Action proved the Ruin of what they thought it would preserve. *For when the Lord of the Vineyard cometh, (whose Power no Creature is able to resist, nor to escape his Vengeance) what will*

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he do unto those Husbandmen? To this Question which our Lord asked the Chief Priests and Pharisees, at the close of the Parable, they answered, (as they could not chuse but do) *he will miserably destroy those Wicked Men, and will let out his Vineyard to other Husbandmen, which shall render him the Fruits in their Seasons.* All the World must own that this is but Just; and they themselves against whom the Parable was spoken, and who did Perceive it to be so, could not but acknowledge it: and so great is ^{V. 45.} the Power of Truth, especially when pressed Home upon the Conscience by a Divine Reprover, they were forced to pass this Terrible Sentence upon themselves as no more than their just Desert. And 'twas a Sentence, indeed so very terrible, that their Hearts sunk within them at the very Thoughts of it, and St. Luke tells us, they added this ^{Lu. 20. 16.} Deprecation to it, *God forbid!*

There is a great deal of dreadful Emphasis in those Words, *He will miserably destroy those Wicked Men;* And which were to a Tittle fulfilled about forty Years after, in the Total Ruin of that Nation; and that in so dreadful a manner, as is at large described by *Josephus*, an Historian of their own, who was an Eye-witness of it, that the like was ^{Mat. 24. 21.}

not

not from the beginning of the World to that time, no, nor ever shall be. And as for his *Letting out his Vineyard to other Husbandmen*, which should render him the Fruits in their Season; That, tho' the Expression is softer, yet threatens as great an Evil, the Subversion of their Church and Religion: Both which most Heavy Judgments, they lie under even to this Day. God hath taken away the Hedge of his Ancient Vineyard, (as he Threatned, *Isa. 5. 5.*) and suffered it to be eaten up; and broken down the Wall thereof, so that 'tis trodden under Foot; he has laid it Waste, so that 'tis not Prun'd nor Dig'd, and there comes up nothing but Briars and Thorns; and the Clouds of his Blessing have never since rained upon it. And the Christian Church is now made his Vineyard, as the Jewish was before; and by the Divine Mercy it is so enlarged, as to be capable of receiving all the World, and even those abandon'd Jews, when God shall please to take off the Veil that hath so long hindred them from seeing the Things that belong to their Peace: which Blessed Time he hasten, for the sake of his Infinite Compassions! And the Care of this his Vineyard thus enlarged, he has committed to his Beloved Son, who is the chief Dresser and Cultivater

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vater of it; and *He* was pleased to intrust it in his Absence, first to his Blessed Apostles, and ever since to their Successors the Bishops; and *they* to the Inferior Labourers, whose Business it is to do their utmost Endeavour that it may Thrive and Flourish, and bring forth the Fruits in their Seasons. And great hath been their Diligence, and admirable has been their Success.

How far and wide hath this Vineyard spread her Branches! *the Hills are covered with the Shadow of it, and her Boughs are like the goodly Cedars,* and never was there better Fruit, and more to the Honour and Satisfaction of God, than has been produced by the Christian Church in all Ages. 'Tis true, the first Times of Christianity did bring forth the greatest Plenty; but the Fruit is of the same Excellency that the Church produces now; only it must be confessed to our Shame, there is much greater Scarcity of it than there was at first.

The Christian Doctrines, and Rules of Practice, are the same now as ever, and the Encouragement to observe and do them are the same, and so are the Threatningstoo, to those that refuse Obedience; and now as well as then there is an Order of Men set apart purposely to urge all this upon

upon us; and (which indeed is all in all) the Assistance of the Good Spirit of God to enable us to perform our Duty, is still afforded us in sufficient Plenty: And one great Blessing the present Church of Christ enjoys, which the Primitive did not, and which one would think should mightily promote its bringing forth all the Fruits of Righteousness in great abundance, and that is, *Peace and Quiet*, the Favour and Protection of Kings and States; which for some hundreds Years opposed the *Primitive* Church with all possible Malice and Cruelty, and Persecuted it with the greatest Violence, so that Blood and Slaughter, and Inhumane Torments, were every where the Lot of the Disciples of Jesus.

And yet, then did the Church flourish most in real Holiness; the true Life and Spirit of the Christian Religion appear'd then in Perfection, notwithstanding all those terrible Discouragements; and the more its Enemies endeavoured its Ruin, the more still it spread even to a Miracle, conquering every where by Patience and Constancy, and Meekness, and unparallel'd Virtue, and *overcoming Evil with Good*.

'Tis true, They had then *extraordinary* Aid from above, and were *mightily strengthened* by the Spirit of God in the

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Inner Man; and 'twas but needful that they should be so, considering what severe Trials they were to undergo: but then, the usual and *common* Assistances of Grace, one would think should be as effectual to keep Religion Alive and Vigorous in the *prosperous* State of the Church, as those more *extraordinary* Ones were, when *Persecution* rag'd against it; and so, no doubt they would, were we as Hearty and Sincere, and as much Christians in earnest as they were.

But the Truth is, Prosperity and Ease are apt to make People Careless, Vain, and Wanton, and to forget a *Future* Heaven, when they enjoy so much Happiness at present: And this, as it exposes to many Temptations, so it makes Men easily yield to them, without considering the sad Consequences of what looks so fair and inviting; and provided they perform the outward Exercises of Religion with Decency, and are not guilty of any Scandalous and Notorious Vices, they think they do very well, and aspire no higher. And by this Means Religion dwindles away into Formalities and empty Shews, and the substantial Fruits of it are but rarely met with. Whereas Affliction, and a State of Danger, is naturally apt to rouse People up, and make 'em stand upon their Guard and look about 'em;

'em; and with all Seriousness and Diligence prepare for a better place, when they find so little Comfort and so much Ill-treatment here. It cures Men's Vanity, and Quickens their Devotion; effectually Weans them from the World, and raises their Thoughts above: and then, when the Time of Trial comes, they are ready for it, and prepared to make a Noble Defence, and even to Sacrifice their Lives, rather than do a Base, Unworthy Action, and prove false to *Him*, who dy'd a Shameful and most Tormenting Death, to rescue them from Hell. Now this makes Christianity look like it self, in its Native Beauty and Lustre, and mightily advances the Glory of its Divine Author, and is of all things the most grateful to him.

So that 'tis the Peaceful Condition of the Church, the constant Sunshine of Prosperity, that has made this Vineyard of Christ luxuriate so in these latter Ages, and run out into Suckers and superfluous Branches, and bear so little Fruit to what it did at first. But then let us not think that this is the *Natural* effect of the Favour and Goodness of God, who design'd by those benign Influences of his to make it still more Fruitful; No, no, 'tis wholly owing to Men's Idleness and Negligence, and abuse of his continu'd Blessings

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sings to Purposes quite contrary to his gracious Intentions in bestowing them: and which is so highly provoking to him, that tho' the Vineyard shall never be *totally* destroy'd, yet several Parts of it have already felt his just and heavy Vengeance; and more 'tis to be feared will do so too, unless they take the Advice of the Angel to the Church of *Ephesus*, and Remember from whence they are fallen, and Repent, *Rev. 2. 5.* and do their first Works.

And, O that this Church of Ours, which is so excellently establish'd, and so like the Primitive in Faith and Doctrine; were as like it in the Exemplary Lives of those of its Communion! O that the great and continued Mercies of God to us, and his intermingled Judgments too, might awaken us in this our Day into a feeling Sense of the things that belong to our Peace, before they be hid from our Eyes; and soften our obdurate Hearts, and lead us to Repentance!

Let every one of us Pray earnestly for the Peace of our *Jerusalem*, and Live as those that heartily wish her Prosperity; for nothing will so ascertain God's constant Favour to her, and Protection against all her Enemies, as a daily and plentiful Offering of those Fruits of Holiness, which she continually exhorts all her Children to bring forth! And

And, Blessed be God, her serious and affectionate Exhortations have not been wholly in vain: And whatever high Pretences some may make to extraordinary Sanctity, who are not of her Communion, and whatever Aspersions their Envy may throw upon us; I believe from my Heart, there is not more sincere true Goodness, both of Clergy and People, in any Part of the Christian Church, than in this: And this we trust will incline God to continue to be our Support and Defence.

But still we must own our Defects; and those that have none, let them cast the first Stone at us. And as we must own them, so for the sake of all that is dear to us, let us never rest till we have supplied what is wanting to make us thoroughly acceptable to God. And the way to do it is to live up to our Profession, to walk by our excellent Rule, to have our Conversation and our Doctrine all of a piece, and as becomes those, who are so Happy as to be Members, of the purest Christian Church in the World; and which constantly teaches us the same Lesson our

Blessed Master and his Apostles
*Tit. 2 11, &c. did, That denying Ungodliness and
 Worldly Lusts, we should live Soberly, Righteously, and Godly in this present
 World; looking for that Blessed Hope, and
 the Glorious Appearing of the great God,*
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and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and Purify unto himself a peculiar People, zealous of Good Works. This is our Doctrine, and these are the Fruits which God expects from us and which we earnestly urge every one to produce; and if our Practice were but agreeable, we should be as dear to God as the *Apple of his Eye*, and have a *Praise and a Name among all People of the Earth.* *O when shall this Once be!*

*Deut. 32. 10.
Zeph. 3. ult.*

And thus much for an Explication of this Parable, and a brief Application of it to our selves.

II. I proceed now to make some more particular improvement of the 37th. ver. *But last of all he sent unto them his Son.* Which Words are of great Regard, and signify, that the Christian Religion, is the last and most compleat Revelation of the Divine Will to Mankind; by which, as it now is, without any Revisals of it, or additions to it; all the World, both Jew and Gentile that have heard of its glad Tidings, shall stand or fall for ever at the Day of Judgment. Or in other Words, the Gospel State, or the New Covenant which God hath made with Man in Christ, is his *Final Dispensation* in order to Man's Eternal Happiness; and whoever hears of

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this new Covenant, and is Invited to enter into it, and either wholly Rejects it, or neglects to perform the Conditions of it, must Perish without Remedy. *Last of all*, says the Parable, the Lord of the Vineyard *sent his Son*, to require the Fruits of it, *Saying, They will reverence my Son*; But when instead of this, *The Husbandmen cast him out of the Vineyard and slew him*, nothing follows but their most *Miserable Destruction*.

Divers Dispensations have there been of the Merciful God in order to fallen Man's Recovery of his Favour, and Attainment of that Happiness for which he at first design'd him; and which 'twill not be amiss to touch upon a little.

Gen. 5, & 6. Chap. *Noah*, who was the Tenth in a direct Line from *Adam*, (so soon had *all Flesh Corrupted his way upon the Earth*) was the first we read of that was sent as a *Preacher of Righteousness* to the Wicked World; to try if he could reform them, and perswade them to such a Repentance as might avert those Judgments which they had so much deserved; and which, upon their obstinate Impenitency, after a long time of Tryal and Forbearance, God was resolved to shower down upon them, and did so to the Destruction of all but *Noah* and his little Family.

After

After the Renovation of the World, when the Waters of the *Flood* were retreated to their proper Mansions, but Wickedness, like a second Deluge had overspread the Face of it again; the God of Compassions revealed himself and his Will in some measure to the Patriarchs, and in the Families of *Abraham, Isaac* and *Jacob*, which by his Blessing soon grew very Numerous, he sow'd the Seeds of true Religion, and put a very great check to that Idolatry and Iniquity with which the World was so generally Corrupted; and by his extraordinary Favours to those Good People, and their Pious Conversation and Good Example, gave great Invitation and Encouragement to the rest of Mankind, to leave their wonted Vanities and Delusions, and Worship him who is the only true God, and a Bountiful Rewarder of those that Diligently seek him.

Afterwards, when by a particular and very remarkable Providence, the Children of *Israel* were remov'd from their own Land into *Egypt*, and there cherished during the Life of *Joseph*, but after his decease dealt very hardly with; God then, more openly shewed himself to be *their God*, and by a high Hand and Outstretched Arm, by many stupendious Wonders wrought their Deliverance from that insupportable Slavery they Groaned under; and was their Guide

to conduct them to the *Promised Land*, and gave them Laws from his own Divine Mouth, and written with his own Finger, and took them into his own immediate Government. And because they were a very *Rebellious People*, continually provoking their great Governour to Anger, therefore *Sacrifices*, which had been for a great while disus'd, were again revived by his special Command; as *Attonements* for their Sins; whereby God at once demonstrated to them what they themselves had deserved, and what his Justice strictly required; and likewise how Gracious he was to admit the Life of a Beast, in the room of that of the miserable Offender.

By this Means great Advances were made under the *Mosaick Oeconomy* towards lost Man's Recovery; but still there wanted something to render it Compleat: And indeed, *That* was design'd but as a

Preparatory Institution, a kind
Col. 3. 24. of *Schoolmaster to Bring or Educate to Christ*. It consisted chief-

ly of *Rituals* and outward Observances, which could make little or no Improvement of the *Soul* of Man; without which 'twas impossible for him to recover that

Likeness to God in which he was
Heb. 9. 9. Created, and in which consists
 —10.4. his Happiness. *The Gifts and Sacrifices that were then offered, could never*

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make him that did the Service perfect, as pertaining to the Conscience; it being not possible that the Blood of Bulls and of Goats should take away Sins; as the Apostle to the Hebrews excellently argues. No, these were only Figures and Types of what should really be in the Days of the *Messias*; when those Shadows of Purity of Heart and Life in their frequent Washings and Circumcision; of Pardon of Sin in their Sacrifices, thro' the Merit of the Blood of that great Sacrifice, which in the fulness of time should be offered once for all, for the Sins of the whole World; of true Devotion in their Incense, and of Heaven in their Temporal Promises: When these and the like *Shadows* should be happily changed into the *Substance of the Things themselves*; and the Happiness which Mankind lost by the Disobedience of the first *Adam* in Paradise, be Recover'd and Improv'd by the Second, who came down from Heaven. This was the true High-Priest, who successfully mediated between God and Man; appeas'd our Maker's Anger by the Sacrifice of himself, and made a full Revelation of the Divine Will, by a Sincere and Hearty, tho' not perfect Observance of which, we should continue in his Favour, and be Happy in this World, and become capable of the pure Joys of Heaven, whither the Ble-

fed Jesus is gone before, to appear in the Presence of God for his Church, and prepare Mansions for his faithful Servants, *that where he is, there they may be also.*

Of this Blessed Gospel State, the Prophets prophesied long before; and some of them in Terms so plain and express, and in a manner so particular; that it looks more like a History of what was past, than a Prediction of what should be to come, so many Ages after. But they were design'd by God as so many Heralds to proclaim the coming of the great Messiah, and prepare the World for *His* Reception, in whom all the Nations of the World should be blessed.

Thus all the former imperfect *Essays* towards the Recovery of fallen Man, were completed by Jesus Christ the Righteous, the universal Saviour. Thus is the last Hand put, and the finishing stroke given on God's part, to the Great and Glorious Work of our Redemption; and now, henceforward, and for ever, there is no other Name under Heaven, whereby

Man can be saved, but that of
Joh. 14. 6. Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth,
and the Life, and who himself

hath assured us, that *no Man can come to the Father but by him.* For what could be done more in order to the Salvation of sinful Man, than has been already done
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by God in Christ? Here is a *Full, Perfect, and Sufficient Sacrifice, Oblation and Satisfaction made for the Sins of the whole Race of Mankind*, by Jesus Christ the Eternal Son of God, his suffering Death upon the Cross in our stead and for our Redemption; Here is by him, as the Mediator between God and Man, a perfect Rule of Life and Manners given to the World, and all Mens Obedience to it indispensibly requir'd, as the Condition, together with a firm Faith in Christ as the only Saviour, of Man's reaping the Benefit of his Sufferings, and sharing in the Merit of his Blood: And Eternal Life and Happiness, is made the Reward of this Faith and Obedience, and as Eternal Death and Misery the Punishment of the contrary.

And the Christian Law, is in its *own Nature* most highly reasonable, and such as will improve the *Soul* of Man in every thing that is Excellent and Praise-worthy; and 'tis by all Men practicable, in such a Degree as may be sufficient to their Salvation: That is, *Sincerity*, tho' attended with some Failures and Imperfections, will be accepted instead of *Perfect Duty*; and he who knows and pities our Infirmities, has given his Blessed Spirit, to be every ones *Guide and Assistant* that will embrace his help; and if we chance to fall in this our Christian Race, we have

Liberty to rise again by Repentance, and prosecute our Course afresh, and may for all this reach the Prize at last.

And to this Covenant of Infinite Grace and Mercy, *All Men* are now invited; *Greek and Jew, Barbarian, Scythian, Bond and Free.* All that will, may come freely, and *Drink of this Water of Life*; and whoever will believe in Jesus, and become his Disciple by Baptism, and depart from all Iniquity, shall be a happy Partaker of all the inestimable Privileges conferred upon the Christian Church, and need not doubt of a perfect Reconciliation to his Maker.

And if such a Dispensation as *this*, be not God's *Last* Method of recovering fallen Man, 'tis very strange. Can there be a more acceptable and meritorious Sacrifice than the Blood of his Eternal Son, to make Attonement for his rebellious Creatures? And can any thing in Nature be a more Cogent Motive to the utmost Love and Duty of poor condemned Wretches, than to have a Pardon procured for them in such an amazing Manner as this?

Can there be more Holy, Just, and Good Commands, than our Blessed Redeemer hath given us; and which are so wisely contriv'd, that 'tis impossible, in the very Nature of Things, that we should

should be truly Happy either here or hereafter, unless we pay Obedience to them? And can there be more tender Care taken to adapt the Service required of us to our Strength and Ability, to consider our Frail Nature, and Hazardous Circumstances, and Pity our Infirmities, and procure all necessary Aid and Assistance, and assure us too, of all fitting Indulgence when we do amiss?

Can there be any greater Encouragement to our best Services than a *Crown of Glory Eternal in the Heavens*, and an everlasting Enjoyment of the Inconceivable Pleasures of that glorious Place? And can any thing be more effectual to deter us from persisting in our Rebellion against God, than the Threats of an *Eternal Banishment* from his Divine Presence, and his Heavenly Kingdom; and in endless Flames and Tortures to Cohabit with the Devil and his Angels? And can there be a more Diffusive Mercy, and Goodness, than thus to Invite *All Men* to their supreme Happiness, and give them all the Helps that reasonably can be desired in order to their effectually attaining it?

It being so evident therefore, that Mankind is now under God's *Final Dispensation*, relating to their Eternal Happiness; how careful ought every one of us to be, lest by our Infidelity, or In corrigible

gible Wickedness, we fall short of this wonderful Grace of God; and by neglecting, *lose*, so great Salvation!

Before, in the times of Man's Ignorance, and comparatively Dark and Imperfect Knowledge of God's Will, and of the Nature and Guilt of Sin, and the Rewards and Punishments of another World; God *Wink'd* at many things that were not as they should be: and the Imperfection of former Dispensations, may in a great Measure be their Excuse. But now, Men being taught all necessary Truth and Duty, as clearly as is possible; God *commandeth all Men every where to Repent*, as they hope to share in the Benefits of this New Covenant in Christ. And of what *sore Punishment shall they be thought Worthy*, who when God hath done such Wondrous Things to save them, by his Eternal Son; Trample all his gracious offers under Foot, and oppose him as violently, as if he were their greatest Enemy?

But let such Consider, and Tremble when they consider, that this is God's *Final* Tender of Grace, and Pardon to them; and which if they refuse, he will be no more intreated. Those that will not comply with the Method God now takes, by the Mediation of Christ to save them, must expect no further Favour; for this

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is the *last* Opportunity of making their Peace that ever they shall enjoy, and the end of the World draws nigh, and no more Sacrifice shall there be for Sins; nothing but a *fearful Expectation of Judgment and fiery Indignation* at that Terrible Day, when the same Jesus whom they would not receive as their *Saviour*, shall be their *Judge*, and Sentence them to an Inexpressible, but justly deserved Misery, because 'twas put into their Hands to make themselves for ever Happy, but they Slighted and Despised it, and were resolved upon Ruin.

Wherefore, as we hope to be sav'd, we must have a Care of being like the Wicked Husbandmen in the *Parable*; and by no means give Ill Treatment to the *Servants* of the great Lord of the Vineyard, much less to his glorious *Son*.

And if the meanest of God's *Ministers* deserve our Reverence, for the sake of the Authority by which they Act, and the Message that they bring, even the Glad tidings of Peace and Salvation, earnestly perswading us to accept them, and be reconcil'd to God; much more should we *Reverence his Son*, and pay an humble and ready Obedience to whatever he shall require.

And what is it that *he* requires of us, and *they* by his Authority in his Absence, but

but what in all Reason and Gratitude should be given him, *the Fruits of his Vineyard*; which he hath planted with the choicest Vine, and Cultivated with the greatest Care, and Preserv'd and Blessed by a peculiar Providence, and would fain see prosperous and flourishing? And this, not that he stands in need of any thing that the whole Creation can afford, for 'tis from his Inexhaustible Fulness that all things have deriv'd their Being; but purely for our own Benefit, that by Improving under the Means of Grace he hath hitherto bestow'd upon us, we may be capable of still more and more, and he may continue to delight to do us Good.

And of what *Kind* are the Fruits that we are to return him? Truly, no other than what a Wiseman would above all things desire to produce for his own sake, were they not required of him by his Lord; such as Meekness and Humility, Temperance and Chastity, Justice and Honesty, Charity and Brotherly Love, Moderation of our Passions, and the rest of those admirable Virtues which concern our selves and our Neighbour; and a Heart full of Love and Gratitude and Devotion to that Blessed God, to whose undeserved Bounty we are Indebted for all our present Comforts, and to whose boundless Mercy for all our Future Hopes.

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What can be more Kind and Good, as well as Just and Fitting, than for the Lord of the Vineyard to require such Fruit as this? and how thankful should we be to those, and Love and Honour them, who by his Commission continually put us in Mind of this our Duty which tends so directly to our Happiness, and shall have such a Recompence of Reward?

And yet this is the very Reason (for there can be no other) why both our great Master and his Ministers have so little of Men's Affection and Reverence, and so much of their Hate and Contempt. 'Tis because we require good Fruit of them, and will not suffer 'em to go quietly on in their Fatal Barrenness.

'Tis because we disturb 'em in their Vicious Courses, and awaken their Consciences by our Reproofs, and dash their Sinful Pleasures with Gall and Wormwood, by telling them of Death and a Judgment to come, when the Wicked shall be thrown into Hell, and infinite Misery be their Portion who forgot God here; and that nothing can procure us Mercy *then* but a Life of Holiness and Virtue *now*: 'Tis this makes us such Thorns in Mens sides, for these are such cruel Damps to the Jollities of Vice, and the greedy pursuit of Riches, and the towering Projects of the Ambitious, as Flesh and

and Blood can't *bear* ; and therefore must endeavour , by their Discourtenancing and ill Usage of those Messengers of ill News (as they esteem them) to get *rid* of as soon as they can.

The *Name* of a Christian they are willing enough to bear , and like very well to be told of going to Heaven when they die ; and were this all that our Lord and his Servants talk'd of they could be content to hear of it sometimes, and pay some Regard to those who preach to them nothing but Happiness and Glory : but when we shew them the way that must lead to it, and tell them how constantly they must insist in that way, which appears so rugged and unpromising to Men of their Inclinations, and course of Life; this they can't relish at all, this 'tis that makes them so Uneasy, and so much our Enemies.

But if we say nothing more than the Truth ; and 'tis a Truth of such infinite Consequence ; and the very same that Christ and his Apostles have often said before us, and commanded us to declare Impartially to all Men : 'tis strange that for so good an Office we should be so ill thought of, and so Unkindly treated !

Should we Gloze and Flatter, and soothe Men up in their Dangerous Wandrings, what Character should we deserve

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serve from 'em then? for a little while perhaps we might have their good Word, and a kind look; (and it may be not neither; it being so well known what we ought to insist upon, that our Treacherous Neglect of doing it will be turn'd to our Just Reprorach) however, the time will come, when they will curse our unfaithfulness in so great a Trust, and Gnash upon us with their Teeth in bitterest Anguish, for not Importunately urging them to bring forth those Fruits of Righteousness, which they then will find were absolutely necessary to their Salvation.

If therefore the World hate us, we know that it hated our Blessed Master before it hated us. If we were of the World, the World would love his own; but because we are not of the World, but he hath chosen us out of the World, therefore the World hateth us; and all for this cause only, because we tell the truth. O base Ingratitude!

John 15.
18, 19.

Gal. 4. 16.

But let the World take notice of these remarkable Words of our Lord, to the Seventy Disciples whom he sent out to Preach his Gospel; *He that despiseth you, despiseth me, and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.* Let it take notice that all the ill usage and Indignities offered to Christ's Ministers, thro' them strike at their Master; and

Lu. 10. 16.

and Terminate upon God at last, from whom their Authority is originally derived. And what can be expected from such provoking Behaviour, but utter Ruin?

Upon the whole then; when the Servants of the Great Lord of the Vineyard come to urge us to render him the Fruits in their Seasons, let us receive them as becomes those that have so near a Relation to Him, and comply with their Exhortations to the best of our Ability: And since in infinite Condescension, he was pleased to send his Son in these last Days to us, upon so gracious a Message, as to offer pardon to a vile Rebellious World, upon Condition of their rendering him better Fruits of obedience for the future;

even that Divine Son of his, *He. 1. 2,* whom he hath appointed Heir of all things, and is the Brightness of his Father's Glory, and the express Image of his Person; shall we say with the Wicked Husbandmen in the Parable, *This is the Heir, come let us kill him?* Let us crucify him afresh by our Impieties, and put him to an open Shame? Now God forbid! No, let us shew him all possible Reverence, and express it by a chearful Observance of all his Blessed Will; and so

shall we be Coheirs with him, *Mar. 1. 2. 7.* and then, *his Inheritance will indeed be ours.* Amen, Blessed

Lord, Amen!

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The P R A Y E R.

I.

*E*Ternal God, thou Great and Good Father of the Universe, who in all Ages hast shown thy tender Care of the Happiness of Mankind, and by various Revelations to the Patriarchs, to Moses and the Prophets, didst enlighten their Minds in the Knowledge of thee, and taughtst them how to please thee; and in the fulness of time, didst Purchase to thy self an universal Church by the precious Blood of thy Dear Son, Proclaiming to all the World, that whosoever would believe in him should not Perish, but have everlasting Life: For ever blessed and praised be this thy wondrous Love to thy poor unworthy Creatures! and may it so deeply affect us all, as to produce the highest Resentments of Gratitude, and a Return of Love unfeigned, and most constant Duty! May we particularly, of this part of thy Church, which thou hast distinguished with such peculiar Marks of thy Favour, Consider seriously what extraordinary Obligations we lie under to an exemplary Piety, and abundant Fruitfulness in every Grace of the Spirit!

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For

For what could have been done
Isa. 5. 4. more to this Branch of thy
 Vineyard, that thou hast not
Fer. 2. 21. already done it? O let it not
 therefore turn a Degenerate
 Plant; and when thou justly lookest that it
 should bring forth Grapes, of Excellency
 suitable to the noble Stock, and fruitful Soil,
 and all the Care and Culture us'd about it;
 O may it not bring forth Wild and Sowre
 Fruit, and provoke thee to lay it waste, and
 blast it with the breath of thy Displeasure!

II.

*We confess, O Lord, with Shame and
 Confusion of Face, that we have too much de-
 serv'd the Fierceness of thy Anger, and 'tis
 of thy infinite Compassions that we are not
 already consum'd; O do thou still in Wrath
 remember Mercy, and let thy continual
 Pity cleanse and defend that Church,
 which hitherto thou hast covered with the
 Wings of thy Providence, and protect'd
 from all her Enemies round about. We know
 it cannot continue in safety without thy
 Succour, so many crying, down with it
 even to the Ground; Preserve it there-
 fore evermore by thy Help and
 Goodness; and grant that all the Members
 of it, from the highest to the lowest, in their
 several Stations, may make it their sincere*

En

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Endeavour to pluck up every Root of Bitterness, both in themselves and others, and cast out every Poisonous Hurtful thing that hinders its abounding in full Clusters of acceptable Fruit. That so, making a due and grateful Return, for thy uncommon Favours, thou mayst be graciously inclin'd still to continue them to us, and at last admit us into the Church Triumphant above. Thro' the Merits and Mediation of Jesus the Righteous, thy beloved Son, our Lord. Amen.

P A R A B L E V.

Of a Man taking a far Journey, &c.

Mark xiii. 34, &c.

The Son of Man is as a Man taking a far Journey, who left his House, and gave Authority to his Servants, and to every Man his Work, and commanded the Porter to Watch.

Watch ye therefore, (for ye know not when the Master of the House cometh, at Even, or at Midnight, or at the Cock-crowing, or in the Morning) lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.

And what I say unto you, I say unto all Watch.

OUR Blessed Lord, being at Jerusalem, not long before his bitter Sufferings and Death, upon his Disciples beholding with Admiration the magnificent Building of the Temple, and vast Bigness of the Stones, that were made use of; took occasion to tell them of the Destruction

that Temple, that *One Stone*
should not be left upon another — 2.
that should not be Thrown down:

And upon the further Enquiry of *Peter, James, John and Andrew*, who desired him to tell them *when those things should be, and what should be the Sign when all those things*, (which he had formerly foretold, should come upon that Wicked City for rejecting him,) *should be fulfilled*; He was pleas'd to give them a more particular Account of that dreadful Destruction, and the forerunners of it, not so much to gratify their Curiosity, as to confirm the Faith of Believers in that severe time of Tryal, when they should see all things come to pass so exactly according to his Prediction so many Years before; and likewise as a kind warning to them, when they saw those Signs, to make the best Provision they could for their Safety by a timely Flight from that unhappy City, which was so Irremediably devoted to Misery and Ruin.

V. 14.

V. 31.

As for the *Time* of that Destruction, he told them in general, that *that Generation should not pass 'till* *all these things were done*; but *of the Day and Hour, knew no* *Man, no not the Angels in Heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.*

V. 30.

— 32.

And then

then he advises them to be upon their constant Guard, and to walk with great Caution and Circumspection, and to be very frequent in the Exercises of Devotion; *Take ye heed, Watch and*

v. 33. *Pray, for ye know not when the time is.* And to give them the quicker Sense, and more lively Apprehension of what he said, he represents it in the Parable above written, and draws the same Conclusion from it, *Watch ye therefore, &c. Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping; and what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.*

So that this *Parable*, and those others to the same purpose in the 24th of *St. Matthew*, and 21st of *St. Luke*, were in our Lord's Primary Intention designed to forewarn his Disciples of the sad Times that were coming upon *Jerusalem*, and engage them in a watchful Preparation for them; but that Destruction of the obstinate Jews, being by all look'd upon as a Type of God's Just Vengeance upon irreclaimable Sinners at the Final Judgment, and our Lord seeming to lead us to do so, by making an immediate Transition in *St. Matthew's Gospel*, from discoursing upon that terrible Judgment upon the Jewish Nation, *Chap. 24, &c.* to a Description of the Judgment of the last Great Day upon all the World, *V. 31.*

of *Ch. 25.* And the same Preparation being necessary for the one as the other, and the same Cautions being given by our Saviour relating to both: We may improve the *Parable* to very good Purpose, by considering it with *Mat. 25. 13.* respect to that Tremendous Day which God hath appointed, when he will judge the World in Righteousness by that Man whom he hath ordained, even Jesus his Eternal Son, our ever Blessed Redeemer.

But first we shall give a brief Explication of the *Parable* in order to it. By the Son of Man's taking a far Journey and leaving his House is signified our Lord's Ascension into Heaven after he had finished the Glorious Work of our Redemption by his Death and Resurrection; and leaving his Church, which is his great Family or Household to the Management of those he thought fit to Intrust in his Absence. And he gave Authority to his Servants, the chief Ministers of his Kingdom, the Apostles and their Successors the Bishops, and the Civil Powers too when they became *Christians*, to take Care of the Good Government of it; and to every Man, every particular Member from the highest to the lowest, he assign'd his proper Work, and Duty in his Station, of which he would require an Account at his Return,

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and commanded the Porter to watch. That
is, gave a strict Charge to the Clergy,
those that by their Office are to watch
for the Souls of their Brethren, and have
the Power of the Keys committed to them,
to admit into, and to shut out of the
Church; to be very Vigilant for the Good
of the Holy Society in general, and of
every Soul in particular under their In-
spection, and to preserve them, as much
as in them lay, in a good Condition for
their Great Lord's Return: Wakeful and
Circumspect, Diligent and Industrious
in their several Places, that all things
might be in a good Readiness for him, *Left*
coming suddainly he should find them sleep-
ing, Idle, Careless and Negligent, which
would be of the worst Consequence, and
bring upon them the severest Punishment.
And because the Time of his coming was
so uncertain, both as to the *Day and the*
Hour, for ye know not when the Master of
the House cometh, whether at Even, or at
Midnight, at the Cock Crowing, or in the
Morning; therefore it became every one
to be ready, and that he might be so, to
Watch. And what I say unto you, says our
Lord, meaning his Apostles, *I say unto all,*
Watch.

This may be sufficient by way of Ex-
plication, of what is so plain in it self.
I shall therefore proceed to consider this

Para-

Parable with respect to the great *Day of Judgment*, and endeavour so to represent the Terrors that will attend it, as to make them an Argument to perswade us to provide for that dreadful Time by a Life of all Holy Conversation and Godliness: that so we may not be surpriz'd by it in an ill Condition to appear before the Tribunal of Jesus, nor be *asham'd before him at his coming* whenever it shall be, or whenever Death shall put an end to our Probation here, and as it were, bind us over to that great Assize; but having our Accounts ready, and our selves in some measure prepared, we may give them *in* with Joy and not with Grief.

And in order to this, I shall do three things.

1. *First*, I shall consider what may be most moving with respect to the *Time* of our great Lord's second coming.

2. *Secondly*, What may most affect us relating to the *Persons* that are then to appear before him, and be judg'd by him; and.

3. *Thirdly*, What may leave the most lasting good Impressions upon us as to the *Manner of proceeding* at that terrible Day, and the several Sentences that will then be past, and their Execution.

1. As for the first particular, the *Time* of our Great Lord's second coming, Three Things

Things are to be taken Notice of; (1.) That 'tis utterly unknown to us when that time will be; (2.) That in all Probability 'tis not now far off; (3.) That when it does come it will be suddain and surprizing, and usher'd in with affrighting Signs and Forerunners, and very Strange and amazing Appearances.

1. *First*, 'Tis utterly unknown to any created Being *when* that time will be. This is evident from our Lord's express Words quoted before, *of that Day and Hour knoweth no Man, no not the Angels in Heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only*; and here in the Parable, *ye know not when the Master of the House cometh, whether at Even or at Midnight, or at the Cock Crowing or in the Morning*; *Watch ye therefore*: As much as to say, in what Age of the World, or in what part of any Man's Life the Day of Judgment shall be; or the Day of Death, which will consign every particular Person to it, is perfectly in the Dark to all but God himself: and therefore, 'tis fit every Man should live in a serious awful Expectation of it, and endeavour to be ready for it by a truly Pious Course of Life, that whenever it shall come it may be to his Advantage.

And indeed, The uncertain time, of a certain event, upon which depends a Man's whole greatest Interest, must needs

be

be an irresistible Motive, to any considering Man, to a constant careful Preparation for it, lest at length he be caught in such ill Circumstances as will inevitably be his Ruine. And I don't question but it was for this Reason that our Good God, who so truly desires our Happiness, hath made this matter so great a *Secret* as he has. For the *known* time of an Event, makes Men too apt to Defer their Provision for it till 'tis too late, and the further off it is, the less notice they take of it, and very frequently 'tis quite forgot; and because 'tis not likely to fall out in *their* Time, they are too Prone with those *St. Peter* mentions, *2. Pet. 3. 4.* to flatter themselves that it will *never be*. And the wicked Servant in another *Parable* spoken to this purpose, *Mat. 24. 48.* when he thought that his Lord *delay'd his Coming*, run riot presently as if he would never return at all, and *began to smite his fellow Servants, and to eat and drink with the Drunken*. Wherefore to engage us all to a Watchful Preparation, he hath conceal'd the time of his Coming, and intrusted no Creature with it, no not the Humanity even of the Judge himself: and may we be such Faithful and Wise Servants, as to make that Good Use of his Secrecy which he design'd we should; and as *St. Luke* expresses it, have
our

our Loyns girded about, and our Lights burning, that in what Watch soever our great Master shall come, we may be found ready waiting for him, and busied in a Conscientious performance of our proper Duty! and for ever Blessed will be those Servants whom their Lord when he cometh shall find so doing!

2. But Secondly, As 'tis uncertain when this Time of Christ's Return will be, so in all Probability 'tis not now far off: I'm sure 'tis almost Seventeen Hundred Years since St. Peter said, *the end of all things was at hand*; and if the Computation of the Jews deserves any Regard, who tell us that six Thousand Years at most, shall be the Measure of this World's Continuance, that Number is so near compleated, that it can't be long before it will have an end; and we, making such great haste to fill up the Measure of our Iniquities, do proportionably hasten our Lord's Coming to the Final Judgment. And indeed the Affairs of the World at this time are such fair Advances towards the Completion of what Christ said should come before the End was, * that *that alone would induce me to think, that it is even now nigh at hand. When these things begin to come*

* Mat. 24.

Mar. 13.

Lu. 21. 28.

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come to pass, then look up, and lift up your Heads, for your Redemption draweth nigh, And learn a Parable of the Fig-Tree; when her Branch is yet tender, and putteth forth Leaves, ye know that Summer is near, so in like manner; when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the Doors, Mar. 13. 28. And shall we be in the near Neighbourhood of such a fiery Tryal, and make it no part of our Care to Refine and Purify our Selves from all Filthiness both of Flesh and Spirit, that we may be found Vessels of Honour fit for our Great Master's Use? Shall we lavish away our Opportunity in Vanity and Folly, and the Service of our Lusts, when very shortly we must give a strict Account of all that we have either thought, or said, or done, before an Infinitely Just and Holy Judge; and be for ever rewarded according to our Deservings? Now God forbid! Rather let us be sober, and watch unto Prayer, and be so much the more careful to redeem our time, as we see that Day approaching. For,

3. Thirdly, When this dreadful Day does come, 'twill be suddain and surprising, and ushered in with affrighting Signs and Fore-runners, and very strange and amazing Appearances. Thus, in Matt. 24. 27. the Coming of the Son of Man is compar'd to the sudden Flashings of Lightning; in the 37, 38, 39. to the
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Deluge in the Days of Noah, which was
 so far from being expected by that Wicked
 Generation, (notwithstanding the
 Warnings given them by that Good Man,
 and the Preparation which for many
 Years he himself was making for it in
 building the Ark) that *they were Eating*
and Drinking, Marrying and giving in Mar-
riage until the very Day that Noah entred
into the Ark, and knew not, were in no
 Apprehension of it, *until the Flood came*
and took them all away; so also shall the
coming of the Son of Man be. And, Mat.
 25. 5, 6. 'tis liken'd to a Cry made at Mid-
 night when all slumbered and slept. And,
 1 Thes. 5. 2. St. Paul tells us, that *the Day*
of the Lord so cometh as a Thief.
 2 Pet. 3. 10. *in the Night,* (and St. Peter says
 the same) *for when they shall say*
Peace and Safety, then sudden Destruction
cometh upon the secure Wicked World, as
Travel upon a Woman with Child, and they
shall not escape.

As for the Fore-runners of his coming
 which shall alarm the drowzy World,
 and be the last Warning and Call to Re-
 pentance that ever shall be given; our
 Saviour hath given us a terrible Descrip-
 tion of them, Lu. 21. 9, 10. where he says
 there shall be *Wars and Commotions, Nation*
rising up against Nation, and Kingdom against
Kingdom, and great Earthquakes in divers
places,

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places, and Famines, and Pestilences, and fearful Sights, and great Signs shall there be from Heaven; and upon Earth distress of Nations, with Perplexity, the Sea and the Waves roaring: All which, tho' prophecy'd of, and fulfill'd in the Destruction of Jerusalem, yet look'd still forward to the final Doom of the World, the Ruin of that part being a Type of the Destruction of the whole.

Good God! How great will be the Terror and Confusion of such times as these! And how inexpressible the Horror and Amazement when after such Fore-runners the dreadful Scene shall be open'd and the Last Day begin! When the softnesses of Luxury shall be broken off by the sudden Shrieks of terrified Wretches from every Quarter, and the Splendors and Gaieties of the World, in a Moment covered with thick *Joel 2. 30.* Darkness, (as *Joel* prophetically — 3. 15. speaks of that Day of the Lord) accompany'd with a stinking Vapour, and frequent Irruptions of Flame, as if in every place there was an *Ætna*, or a *Vesuvius*: When the Revels of the Night shall be disturb'd with dreadful Convulsions of the trembling Earth, and Flashes of strange Fire that *Joel. 2. 31.* look like Streams of Blood rather than Light, break in upon the
Beds

Beds of Uncleanness: When dire Prodigies shall fill the Heavens, and Distresses all around upon the Face of the Earth, and the Sea at the same time swelling to an amazing highth, a hideous Noise proceeding from the rowling of its mighty Billows, as if those Bars God's Providence had set it were now to be remov'd, and It impatient till it were done, and its proud Waves at Liberty.

When this so great, so sudden, so terrifying a Change shall come,
Lu. 21. 26. well may *Mens Hearts* fail them for fear, and for looking after those things which are then coming on the Earth. And, O how miserable will those Wretches, be who have the inward Horrors of a Guilty Conscience added to these outward Terrors (and which will make them still more terrible) and are thus overtaken in the midst of their Wickedness and Forgetfulness of God! and how happy beyond all Expression those that shall be found employ'd in the Duties of our Holy Religion, their Lamps full and trim'd, and in a readiness when their Divine Bridegroom comes, to go out to meet him with Cheerfulness and Joy! And thus much for the *Time* of our great Lord's second coming. I come now in the

II. Second place to consider what may most affect us concerning those that are then to appear before him, and be judg'd by him; and they are all the Sons of Men, that ever liv'd, or shall be then alive, both Good and Bad; and likewise the Evil Angels, *who kept not their first Estate, but left their own Habitation, and were reserved like so many condemned Criminals, in everlasting Chains under Darkness, unto the Judgment and*

final Sentence of this last Great Day. Thus our Lord assures us that before him shall be gathered all Nations, and St. Paul says that

Mat. 25.

32.

2 Cor. 5. 10.

Rom. 14. 12.

we must ALL appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, and every one of us give account of himself to God, and so even the Righteous not excepted; and our Lord himself tells us that the Sheep shall

be set on his Right Hand. And

Acts 10. 42.

St. Peter tells us, that he is or-

dained of God to be the Judge of Quick and

Dead; and St. Paul says to the Corinthi-

ans, know ye not that we shall Judge Angels,

and the Devils know that they shall

then be brought to receive their Doom,

as we may Collect from what some of

them said to Christ, Mat. 8. 29. Art thou

come hither to torment us before the time?

And if we ask, how shall all these be

call'd or summon'd to this universal Judg-

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ment?

ment? we are told it shall be in the most awful Manner that is pos-

Mat. 24. 31. sible; even with a great Sound of a Trumpet fill'd with the

Breath of an Arch-Angel, or an Arch-Angel's Voice resounding like

1 Thes. 4. 16. it; reaching to the *four Winds*,

or all the Corners of the Earth, piercing to the bottom of the Deep, and the

dire Abodes of the Spirits of Darknes, universally heard, and universally obey'd;

Men and Devils, the Righteous and the Wicked, the Dead and the Living; all

immediately preparing to attend the Issues of that wonderful Day. And the

manner of their Appearance, according to what I can collect from Scripture,

will be this. After the Earth and the Sea have given up their Dead, and by

the Almighty Power of God every departed Soul is reunited to its own Body,

which shall then be made ready to receive it, and those that are then alive

have received a Change equivalent to Death; The Good Angels, being guided

by the Omniscient Judge, shall make an exact Separation, in this confus'd Ap-

pearance of all sorts, of the Righteous from the Wicked; and the former they

shall place all together on his Right-hand and the latter on his left, as our Lord

assures us, *Mat. 25.*

And

And what an amazing Scene of things will there then be, when at that shrill Alarm, given by the *Arch-Angel*, the whole Creation shall be in a Hurry and Disorder! The Sea-shores filled with Myriads of People coming up out of the *mighty Waters*, none *now* looking back with Joy upon that Merciless Element from which they are Delivered, tho' it roars louder, and swells higher far, than when with Shrieks and Cries they perish'd in it; but rather with Wondring and Anxious Eyes looking forward to the Terrors of the *Land*, and wishing they could again go back, and shroud themselves in the Caverns of a Rock, or lie conceal'd in the Bottom of the Deep: when the Graves on Land, shall at the same time every where be open'd, and the affrighted Inhabitants of those Dark Mansions, like Men awakned by some sudden Noise from a deep Sleep, shall arise full of Terror and Amazement; and the *Living*, who but just before perhaps were putting the Evil Day far from them, rejoicing in their Prosperity and Abundance, and swimming in Luxury and Riot, shall see and hear all this, and be driven to the place of Judgment, with those that have just left their Tombs, Shoals of Apostate Spirits mixing with them as they go, who shall then be dragg'd

from their Subterraneous Dungeons, and brought upon the Earth, and probably be rendred visible, as the Good Angels then will be; and all the Circumstances of Horror round about, together with the united Howlings, Shrieks, and Lamentations of such whose Consciences have condemn'd them beforehand: when at length the bright Ministers of this great Judge, shall curiously sort each Person in his proper place, and Pick and

Mal. 3. 17. Cull out of this vast Number the *Jewels* of the Kingdom, and abandon the rest to the Compa-

ny of Hellish Fiends and Furies, in dreadful Expectation of their Doom: Good God! What an amazing Scene of things will there then be! What a strange mixture of Passions will there then be seen! On one Hand, what Expressions of Comfort and Hope, what tokens of a longing Desire to see their dear Saviour and best Friend, among the virtuous few! And on the other, what Ghastly Looks, what Dread and Anxiety, what hideous Wailings and Outcries, will be observ'd quite through the innumerable Multitudes of the Wicked! How will they then wish in the Bitterness of their Souls, that in their life-time they had thought more seriously of this time of Terrors, and been influenc'd by it to make Religi-

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on their Business in good earnest; that so Mercy might have been shewn them *then*, when they stand so much in need of it, but which, in the Condition they then are, they know they must despair of! And how should we, who as yet have time and space given us for Repentance, improve it to the best Advantage, and make it our great Employment to attain such a Temper and Disposition of Mind here, as may then rank us in the Number the Blessed!

III. And now, all things being thus in a Readiness, I come in the last place to consider what may leave the most durable good Impression upon us, as to the manner of the Judge's Appearance, and his proceeding at that terrible Day, and the several Sentences that will then be past, and their Execution.

As for the manner of the Divine Judge's Appearance, there are three or four Texts of Scripture that will give us Information. In *Acts* 1. 11. we find two Angels telling our Lord's Disciples, when with wondering Eyes they were looking after him as he ascended from them into Heaven; *this same Jesus which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner, as ye have seen him go into Heaven.* Now, how that was,

from their Subterraneous Dungeons, and brought upon the Earth, and probably be rendred visible, as the Good Angels then will be; and all the Circumstances of Horror round about, together with the united Howlings, Shrieks, and Lamentations of such whose Consciences have condemn'd them beforehand: when at length the bright Ministers of this great Judge, shall curiously sort each Person in his proper place, and Pick and

Cull out of this vast Number
Mal. 3. 17. the *Jewels* of the Kingdom, and abandon the rest to the Compa-

ny of Hellish Fiends and Furies, in dreadful Expectation of their Doom: Good God! What an amazing Scene of things will there then be! What a strange mixture of Passions will there then be seen! On one Hand, what Expressions of Comfort and Hope, what tokens of a longing Desire to see their dear Saviour and best Friend, among the virtuous few! And on the other, what Ghastly Looks, what Dread and Anxiety, what hideous Wailings and Outcries, will be observ'd quite through the innumerable Multitudes of the Wicked! How will they then wish in the Bitterness of their Souls, that in their life-time they had thought more seriously of this time of Terrors, and been influenc'd by it to make Religi-

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the 9th Verse of that Chap. informs us,
where 'tis said, *a Cloud received him out
of their Sight*; wherefore, as on a Cloud
he went up into Heaven, so on a Cloud
he will from thence return to Judg-
ment. And accordingly he tells us him-
self *Mat. 24. 30.* that we shall then see
*the Son of Man coming in the Clouds of
Heaven, with Power and great Glory.*
What this Great Glory is, he likewise
tells us, *Lu. 9. 26.* where he says, that he
shall come *in his own Glory, and in his
Father's, and of the Holy Angels*; where,
by his own Glory, 'tis very probable is
meant, that Glorious Celestial Body
with which he now sits at the Right-
hand of God, and of which his Appear-
ance to the Apostles at his Transfigura-
tion gives us some Notion,
Mat. 17. 2. when *his Face did shine as the
Sun, and his Raiment was white
as the Light*; to which is agreeable that
Vision of St. John, *Rev. 1. 13.* when in
the midst of the Golden Candlesticks he
beheld one that was like the Son of Man,
*his Head and his Hair were white as Wool,
as white as Snow, his Eyes were as a flame
of Fire, and his Countenance was as the
Sun shining in his Strength.* By his Fa-
ther's Glory may be meant a bright Circle,
as of flaming Fire, surrounding him;
for so God did generally use to descend,

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as is evident from several places of the Old Testament; in particular he did so when he gave the Law to *Moses*

upon Mount *Sinai*, and this *Exo. 19. 18.*
Body of Fire is in *Exod. 24. 17.*

call'd *the Glory of the Lord*; and accordingly *St. Paul* tells the *Thessalonians*,

that *Christ shall be reveal'd from 2 Thes. 1. 8.*
Heaven in flaming Fire, taking

Vengeance on those that know not God; to which the *Psalmist* alludes, *Pf. 97. 3, &c.*

A Fire goeth before him, and burneth up his Enemies round about; his *Lightnings*

enlighten the World, the Earth saw and trembled, the Hills melt like Wax at the

Presence of the Lord of the whole Earth; and then follows, *the Heavens declare his*

Righteousness, and all the People see his Glory.

By the *Glory of the Holy Angels*, no doubt is meant those *Myriads* of the *Heavenly Host*, who with a *Shout of Triumph* shall attend him at this great *Solemnity*; and minister to him in the *Transactions* of this *Dreadful Day*. Thus

St. Paul tells us, *1 Thes. 1. 2.* *He shall be revealed from Heaven with his mighty An-*

gels; and *Ch. 4. 16.* *The Lord himself shall descend from Heaven with a Shout*;

and the *Prophet Daniel* says, *Dan. 7. 10.*

He beheld, and thousand Thou-
sands Minister'd unto him, and ten thousand

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times ten thousand stood before him, and
the Judgment was set, and the Books were
opened.

And what a glorious Appearance will there then be, when the Eternal Son of God, arrayed with Robes of Majesty, bright as the Light, shall be seen to come down from on high, *making the Clouds his Chariot, and walking upon the Wings of the Wind*, shining with Beams of Glory like those of the Mid-day Sun; when now, no longer a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with Grief, he shall be encircled with a mighty Host of Angels, making frequent and loud Acclamations to the Honour of his ever Blessed Name, and as he descends, the Voice of Arch-Angels, and loud Thunders, and Lightnings, preparing his way before him, and making the Earth Tremble at the presence of its God. When at length he shall have fix'd his Throne for Judgment, and in this Grandeur, and Resplendent Equipage, which infinitely exceeds

all worldly Glory, every Eye
Rev. 1. 7. shall see him, and they also that
pierced him: How ravish'd will every Good Christian be, to see his once despised afflicted Saviour, then become the Praise, and Worship, and Wonder of the Universe! his *Manger*, his *Poverty*, his *Bloody Sweat*, his *Stripes*, his *Reproach-*

es,

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es, his *Thorns*, his *Cross*; All this, then chang'd into the greatest *Glory*, *Power*, and *Majesty*, that ever the World beheld! how full of Joy unspeakable to see their mighty Deliverer come thus attended to wipe all Tears from their Eyes, and compleat their Happiness to Eternal Ages, and put upon their Heads those Crowns of Glory, which his great Bounty had laid up for those that love him in Sincerity!

And on the other side, (I tremble but to think it) what Shame, what Horror, what Agonies, will fill the Souls of those most miserable Wretches; whose obstinate Wickedness or Unbelief (which will be the same thing *then*) hath made this Judge their Enemy! With what Astonishment, Confusion of Face, and Anguish of Spirit, will those Malicious *Jews*, for Instance, and cruel insulting Soldiers, behold him; whom once they Hated, Mock'd and shamefully Abus'd, bound hard with Cords, and Scourged unmercifully! How will they bear the Splendors of that Countenance, which once in Scorn they Blindfolded, and Buffeted, and Spit upon? What will they think when they shall see bright Rays of Glory round those Temples, which once they crown'd with Thorns; and those very Hands and Arms now strength-

strengthened by Omnipotence, and ready to execute the just Vengeance of God upon them, which once they cruelly extended on the Cross, and through the tenderest Parts smote Nails to fasten him to the (as then esteem'd) Accursed Tree!

What equal, nay what greater Consternation will seize on those, who here were either *Atheists* or *Infidels*; or though they did pretend to be his Followers, and trod his Courts, and knelt before him, and lifted up their Hands and Eyes to him in his Sanctuary as to their God and Saviour, and had the Honour to be call'd by his Name; yet by a course of Wickedness which he hates, liv'd in open defiance of him, and by their profligate Conversation, not only disparag'd their Holy Profession, but made all the wondrous Things he did and suffer'd, for their Happiness and Salvation, of none Effect!

'Tis not to be express'd, nor now conceiv'd, what Misery will then be felt, by all that have refus'd Obedience to him; and either rejected him with inexcusable Infidelity, or Dishonour'd, and Griev'd him by an irreligious Life. And may our own Experience never make us more sensible of it, than we now are! which to prevent, there is no other way

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way, than more and more to confirm and strengthen our Faith, and add Virtue to it, and sincerely endeavour to preserve a Conscience void of Offence both towards God and Man; and then we may look up to him with Comfort. But to proceed.

As for the *Process* at this Great Day, it will be openly in the Face of the whole World, in exact Righteousness, according to every Man's Works, without the least Partiality or Respect of Persons; for every Eye shall see him, and be a Witness of the Justice and Equity of every Particular of his Proceedings: the Blessed Angels standing round about him attending diligently, and ready immediately to execute his most equal Sentence. And not our *Works* only shall be brought into Judgment, (whether Secret or Publick, 'tis all one to the Omniscient Judge) but our *Words* likewise, and even our very *Thoughts*; for of every *Idle Word* our Lord has told us, we shall *Mat. 12. 36.* then give account; and St. Paul says, he will *bring to Light 1 Cor. 4. 5.* the hidden things of Darkness, and make manifest the Counsels of the Heart; and that God shall judge the Secrets of Men in that Day by Christ *Rom. 2. 16.* Jesus.

So

So that then, every *Thought*, *Word*, and *Work*, shall be publickly Examined and Recompenc'd according to its Deserving; and no Highth or Eminence of Condition in any Respect whatever, shall Awe, or Bribe, this Just and Holy Judge; for there is no respect of Persons with God, and all things shall be transacted with impartial Justice before his dread Tribunal.

And what an intolerable Shame will it be to the Sinner, to have all his Filthiness laid open thus to all the intelligent Creation! how will he endure the Sight of his brutish Vices, when stripp'd of those Counterfeit Charms which once so bewitch'd his Affections, and expos'd in their own Native Ugliness and Deformity! What a Confusion will the Hypocrite be in, the formal *outside* Saint, when his Disguise shall be taken off, and secret Intemperance and Lust, Avarice and Fraud, Pride and Envy, and Malice, discover'd, under the venerable Appearance of extraordinary Sanctity, and Christian Virtue? How blank'd will those *Great* Men be, who here met with nothing but Flattery, and Honour, and Applause, and Woe be to him, however authoriz'd, who dar'd to be their Re-prover; when they shall see *their* Wick-edness made as publick as that of their Vassals, their Guilt hightned by the
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great Advantages and Obligations they had of being shining Examples of true Piety; and those false Praises that were given them turn'd into stinging Upbraidings, and unspeakable Terrors of Conscience; and now, no other Fruit of their abus'd Greatness appear but this, that *mighty Men shall be mightily Tormented.*

On the contrary, what Inexpressible Satisfaction will the Righteous feel, when all the World shall see their Sincerity, their secret Piety and Charity, and excellent Temper of Mind; and when that Meekness and Humility, Patience and Contentedness, Moderation and Self-denial, which heretofore was look'd upon either as Hypocrisy or Madness, shall become their Praise and their Glory, and be applauded with the loud Acclamations of all the bright Inhabitants of Heaven! If their *Sins* likewise shall be mention'd in that day (as some believe they will) 'twill be to shew how efficacious sincere Repentance was in Order to a Sinner's forgiveness, and the greatness of the Divine Mercy and Goodness in being so ready to Pardon what was past, upon a true sorrow for it, and Amendment for the Future: that so all the World may see how desirous God was of the Salvation of all Men, and that their Ruin must be charged upon themselves;

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great Advantages and Obligations they had of being shining Examples of true Piety; and those false Praises that were given them turn'd into stinging Upbraidings, and unspeakable Terrors of Conscience; and now, no other Fruit of their abus'd Greatness appear but this, *that mighty Men shall be mightily Tormented.*

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selves; since upon such easy reasonable Terms they might have been Happy if they would. And how will this add new Degrees of Torment to the Wicked, to see how merciful a God they have made their Enemy; and that with less Pains and Trouble they might have been fav'd, than they have taken to be for ever Damn'd!

And if this, of the mention of the Sins of the Righteous at that Day be true; how exceeding careful should we all be to avoid the very least *Appearance* of Evil in what we think, or speak, or do, because every thing shall be brought in to Judgment; and some *Shame* doubtless will attend the Publication of whatever was sinful, tho' the Sting be taken out by a sincere Repentance.

I come now to the Close of all, which is the several *Sentences* that shall be past, and the manner of their Execution. After the Books have been thus open'd, as St.

John expresses it, and every one's Desert fully known, then *Rev. 20. 12.* will the just and equal Judge, with the most endearing Sweetness, first pass this enravishing Sentence upon those

on his Right hand, Come ye *Mat. 25. 34.* blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the Foundation of the World; and instantly

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ly with ineffable Transport, they shall find themselves *Caught up in the Clouds to meet the Lord in the* 1Thes. 4. 17. *Air*, and joyn with him as Assessors in the final Condemnation of the Wicked, both Men and Devils, according to that Prophecy of *Enoch*, mentioned by St. *Jude*, 14, 15. *Behold the Lord cometh with ten Thousands of his Saints, to execute Judgment upon all, and to convince all that are Ungodly among them, of their ungodly Deeds, which they have ungodlily committed: to which that of St. Paul agrees, 1Cor. 6. 2, 3. Know ye not that the Saints shall Judge the World? know ye not that we shall judge Angels?*

Aud what new Life and Vigour will those most cheering Words *Come ye Blessed*, Inspire into their Happy Souls? what Raptures will they feel at that blissful Meeting in the Clouds, when they shall be welcom'd by the Triumphant Host of Saints and Angels, and embrac'd in the Arms of their dearest Saviour, never more to be separated from him, but with him to enjoy to all Eternity those heavenly Pleasures that are at God's Right-hand for ever more! How will they bless their former Pious Labours, and all their Suffering for the sake of Jesus, which are now repaid with an exceeding and Eternal weight of Glory!
How

How will they love the Memory of their Spiritual Guides, who have been faithful to them, and shew'd them the Right Way to so great Blessedness! And how will those Spiritual Guides rejoyce to see such happy Fruit of their Labours, and to deliver up their Charge in Safety to the great Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls! And how will all be inflamed with Holy Ardours of Desire and Love, at the sight of such infinite Goodness, and such infinite Excellence and Glory!

After this, the Divine Judge, accompanied with that most August Assembly that will then stand on each side of his Throne, will proceed to pronounce this terrible Sentence upon the Miserable Wretches on his Left-hand, and in which the fallen Angels likewise will be involved, *Depart from me ye* *Mat. 25. 41. Cursed, into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* “Depart from me the Fountain
“of Happiness and Perfection, of Life
“and Joy; from me, who once dy'd
“for you in Torments, that you might
“escape those Flames in which you now
“for ever must Welter and be Tortured.
“Depart into those dismal Abodes prepared for the accursed Spirits of Darkness, which now, for your being like
“them

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them in base Ingratitude and Rebellion against God, must become your Portion: Depart into the Regions of Eternal Fire, and Horror, and Despair, which you can't but own you have justly deserv'd, by despising the gracious Tenders that have been often made you, of everlasting Life and Happiness and Glory.

And now, nothing remains to put an end to this Great Day and Time together, but the Execution of this dreadful Sentence. Soon therefore after it is pronounced upon those accursed Creatures who have so thoroughly deserv'd it, we are told by St. Peter that the Heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the Elements melt with fervent Heat, and the Earth and the Works that are therein shall be burnt up; and the Son of Man (saith the great Judge) shall send forth his Angels, and they shall gather them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into a Furnace of Fire, there shall be Wailing and Gnashing of Teeth. Agreeable to that of the Prophet Malachy, behold the Day cometh that shall burn like an Oven, and all the Proud, yea and all they that do Wickedly, shall be stubble; and the Day that cometh, saith the Lord of Hosts, shall burn them

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them up, that it shall leave them neither Root nor Branch; but not so as utterly to Destroy them, for that would put an end to their Misery, which we are assured shall be *Eternal*, and therefore St. John tells us, then shall Men
Rev. 9. 6. seek Death and shall not find it, and shall desire to die, but Death shall flee from them; and accordingly the Punishment of the other World is express'd by *Eternal Death*, to signify the *extremest*, but never *finished* Agonies of the Damn'd in Hell.

And would to God we could all be persuaded, seriously and often to revolve these Terrors in our Minds, and avoid those sinful Courses that will infallibly bring them upon us, before it be too late! That seeing this terrible end of all things is at hand, and will steal upon us, as a *Thief in the Night*, and, as the Parable that occasion'd this Discourse assures us, we know not the time when our Great Lord will come; we would observe his Gracious good Advice, and *Watch and Pray, lest coming suddainly he find us Sleeping!* Since we really look for such things, and all this material Frame of the World shall be dissolv'd, (as St. Peter says,)

2 Pet. 3. 11. *What manner of Persons ought we to be in all Holy Conversation and Godliness! looking beyond the present per-*

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perishing Scene of things, to the *Eternal* World, to which ever Hour brings us nearer and nearer; and making it our chief Business to prepare against that great *Decisive* Day, when either Heaven or Hell will be made our Portion for ever.

Taking heed to our selves, lest at anytime our Hearts be overcharg-
ed with Surfeiting and Drunken-
ness, and the Cares of this Life,
and so that Day come upon us unawares: For as a Snare, shall it come on all them that dwell on the Face of the whole Earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted Worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.

Lu. 21. 34.
&c.

The PRAYER.

I.

MOST Gracious, and All-wise God! who hast plac'd us here in a state of Probation for a future Life, and as Pilgrims journeying to our Eternal Home; make me every day more and more sensible, I beseech thee, that all things here are Flitting and Uncertain, that the present World is not my place of Settlement, but I am travelling apace to that which is, and where I shall be fixed for endless Ages.

And since that Life to come will, thro' the Merits of my Blessed Saviour, be infinitely happy, as well as everlasting, unless I make it otherwise by an obstinate Course of Sin; O grant that I may insist in the Way that leads to it with all possible Care and Circumspection, and endeavour to qualify my self for its pure Enjoyments with the utmost Diligence and Application, and think nothing too much to do or suffer that I may attain it, and value nothing here below, but as it is conducive to my safe arrival at that Blissful Kingdom above!

That is the only Region of Stability and Rest, of uninterrupted Happiness and Glory;

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O therefore, wean me from this Perishing,
this Wicked miserable World, and enable
me to raise my thoughts to Heaven, and fix
my Affections there unmoveably, where my
Treasure is, and vigorously to press after it
in the ways of sincere Holiness, with great
Devotion and Ardent Love!

II.

Thou Blessed Jesus, art my Divine Lea-
der to that heavenly Country, and hast pur-
chased for me an Inheritance in it with thy
most precious Blood, and art gone before
to prepare a place for me, and wilt come
again to receive me to thy self, that where
thou art, there I may be also.

O Dearest, Gracious Lord, what enra-
vising Words are those! Master, we will
follow thee whither soever thou goest?
Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, make
no delay to deliver me from this Body of Sin,
and of Death, and put an end to this my
miserable Exile from thee! O, do but fit
me for thy Divine Presence and Enjoyment,
and then make no long tarrying!

But who may abide the Day of thy
Coming, and who shall stand when thou
appearest, to judge the World in Righte-
ousness, and give to every one according to
his Works! And shouldst thou be extreme
to mark what is done amiss, the best of

us must fall under the strict Scrutiny. But there is Mercy with thee, therefore shalt thou be feared; To thee doth my Soul flee, O Lord, my trembling guilty Soul, and in thy Word thy gracious Promise of forgiveness, upon my true Repen-

tance, is my Trust: For I know
Psal. 130. there is Compassion with thee,
and Plenteous Redemption. O

therefore grant me true Repentance and thy Holy Spirit, that the rest of my Life hereafter may be Pure and Holy, in watchful expectation of that time of Recompence; that I may cast away the Works of Darknes, and put on the Armour of Light: that so when thou shalt come again in thy glorious Majesty to judge both the Quick and the Dead, I may rise to the Life Immortal, and being found acceptable in thy Sight, may be received into thy eternal Joy; thro' thy own Merits and Mediation, who livest and Reignest with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, World without end. Amen.

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P A R A B L E VI.

Of a Creditor that had two Debtors.

Luke vii. 41, &c.

Jesus said, there was a certain Creditor, which had two Debtors; the one owed Five Hundred Pence, and the other Fifty.

And when they had nothing to Pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?

Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, thou hast rightly Judged.

THE Occasion of this Parable, was this. One of the Pharisees having desired our Lord to Eat with him, (out of Curiosity, probably, or some Ill Design, rather than true Respect; as may be collected from his omitting those usual Expressions of Civility that were always paid by the Jews to those they had a value for, when they entertain'd them;) And our Lord having accepted the Invitation, hoping

V. 36.

Mat 22.

15.

Lu. 14. 1.

V. 44. &c.

to improve that Opportunity to the Man's Eternal Good: It was soon nois'd about the Town *that Jesus sat at Meat in the Pharisee's House.* And indeed, it was a thing that might well be the Subject of the Peoples Discourse, that *Christ* and a *Pharisee* should be so friendly: that a Pharisee should invite one to his Table who had so sharply and so often inveigh'd against the Sect he was of, and openly expos'd their Vileness and Hypocrisy; and that *Christ* should vouchsafe his Company to one of those Serpents and Vipers, as he once call'd them, and against whom he had denounced so many dread-

Mat. 23. ful Woes, and who he could not but know hated him mortally, and were always contriving his Destruction. This was so remarkable, that it might well be taken notice of, and told about the City, especially it being the first time, that we read of, of *Jesus* and a *Pharisee* eating together, tho' with Publicans and Sinners he had often done so. But our Blessed Ma-

v. 37. ster; who *came to seek and to save that which was lost*, was ready to embrace every occasion that was offered him, of Promoting the Salvation even of his most inveterate Enemies; and he that was the great Physician of Souls, was best pleas'd when he visit'd those that

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that had most need of his Help, be they who they would, without Prejudice or Partiality, as became the compassionate Saviour of the World.

And we may observe, that when he was at such Entertainments, he made it his Business to instruct the Company, those especially that invited him, in some point or other of his Heavenly Doctrine, as occasion offered, and was most for their Advantage; as we may see particularly in *Luk. 11. 37, &c.* and *Luk. 14. 1, &c.* (two other times after this, when he dined with a Pharisee) and likewise in this *Parable* which is now before us.

An excellent Example this, and would to God it were more followed than it is!

But 'twas his Meat and Drink

to do the Will of him that sent him, Joh. 4. 34.
and to finish his Work; and when

we are inspired with the like true Zeal for Religion, the Honour of God, and the Spiritual Good of our Brethren, we shall likewise endeavour to make our Conversation as useful as we can, and with Prudence (which must Direct and Govern every thing) *to season it*

with Salt, with something that *Col. 4. 6.*
is serious and good to the use of *Epc. 4. 29.*

Edifying, that it may minister
Grace to the Hearers.

Now

—V. 37. *Now there was a Woman in the City which was, or had been a Sinner, one of a Lewd Life, a notorious Prostitute, to whom the Jews gave the Title of Sinners, as a Brand of peculiar Infamy, so just a Notion had they of that foul Sin; and when she knew that Jesus sat at Meat in the Pharisee's House, as unwelcome a Guest as she could not but know she should be to the Pharisee, (which sort of Righteous People in their own Conceits, could not endure the Sight of such Wretches, and esteem'd themselves greatly Polluted, should they chance to touch them) she resolves to go where that Blessed Person was, who by his admirable Sermons had awaken'd her Conscience into a true Sense of her great Wickedness, and reclaim'd her from her former most Vile and Destructive Course of Life; and shew some Expressions of Love and Gratitude to him, in hopes likewise of hearing more of his heavenly Discourse, which now she relish'd above all things. And with her she*

—V. 38. *brought an Alabaster Box of Ointment, and stood at his Feet behind him, weeping whole Floods of Tears of Penitence, of Joy, and Love; even to plenty enough to wash his Feet withal, (which the rude Pharisee had neglected to call for Water for) and then with great*
Ten-

Tenderness, and Affection, and Reverence, *she wiped them with the Hairs of her Head, and kissed them, and anointed them with the Ointment.*

This extraordinary Occurrence, as it could not but make all wonder that took notice of it, especially those that knew the Woman's former Character; so it raised this reflecting thought in the Pharisee (and glad he was that he had so fair an Occasion for it) *This Man, if he were, as he pretends to be, a v. 39. Prophet, would have known who, and what manner of Woman this is that toucheth him, and not have suffered her to take such Freedoms with him, for she is a Sinner.* Thus did this Hypocrite measure our Saviour by himself, and as his haughty Pride, and self Esteem, would have prompted *him* to do, even to have thrust her away with the greatest Scorn and Contempt, saying in the Pharisaical Language, *stand off, for I am holier than thou;* so he suppos'd our Saviour would have done, had he known what a vile Creature she was; and because he did not, therefore he concluded him to be no Prophet.

But our Lord, who was so far from not knowing what sort of a Woman this was, that he knew the proud Pharisee's *Thoughts,* answered them in the *Parable* above recited;

cited; and said, Simon, I have somewhat to
say unto thee; and he said Master

—v. 40. say on. There was a certain Creditor
that had two Debtors, the one ought

him five hundred Pence, and the other fifty;

and when they had nothing to pay, he frankly

forgave them both: tell me therefore which

will love him most? Simon answered and said,

I suppose that he to whom he forgave most.

And he said unto him, thou hast rightly

judged. And then to apply the Parable

home, he turned to the Woman, (who was

overjoy'd, no doubt, to see him take

such notice of her) and said unto Simon,

seest thou this Woman? This poor self-con-

demn'd Sinner whom thou so despisest,

and valuest thy Righteous self so much

above her: I entered into thine House, up-

on thy invitation, and yet, so wanting

wert thou in common Civility to me

(which we see the meek lowly Jesus

could take notice of, and which none of

his Disciples therefore should be failing

in, but be Courteous to all Men) thou ga-

vest me no Water for my Feet,

as if that usual cheap Refresh-

ment were too good for me;

but she hath wash'd my Feet with much more

precious Liquor, her Tears, and wip'd them

with a Towel that never before was seen

to be put to such a Use, even with the

Hairs of her Head. Thou gavest me no

Kiss,

Kiss, when I first entred thy House, thou hadst not Charity enough for that, to such a one as I; whom though thou dost invite to eat with thee, yet 'twas not out of kindness, but that thy Table might become a Snare to me; *but this Woman*, since the time that I came in, hath not ceas'd, with true Gratitude and Affection, to kiss my very Feet. Mine Head with common Oil thou dost not anoint; that would have shew'd much more Respect than I was worthy of, *but this Woman hath anointed my Feet with Precious Ointment*, as an Expression of the great Reverence and Love that she has for me. v. 47.

Wherefore I say unto thee, *her Sins which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.* As if he had said, "As great a Sinner as this Woman hath been, and whom therefore thou dost so contemn and despise; and art ready with much Haughtiness and Spiritual Pride, to thank God that thou art not so vile as she is, and valuest thy self so highly because of thy greater Holiness; as great a Sinner as this Woman hath been, let me tell thee, she is now much better than thy self. Her Sins, upon her hearty Sorrow for them, are forgiven her; and because they are so,

* THERE-

* So the Original Word signifies, as well as for, and is so used in several places of Scripture, and should be so Translated here:

" * **THEREFORE** *she*
 " *loveth much.* The In-
 " vitation I have given
 " to all that are *weary*
 " and *heavy laden* with
 " the Burthen of their
 " Iniquities, to come to ME, that I may
 " give them rest; and the Sense my pub-
 " lick Discourses have wrought in her,
 " of the intolerable *weight* of that Bur-
 " then, having made her weary of it,
 " and desirous to throw it off, and en-
 " clined her to apply her self to me for
 " Help; she hath found Mercy, and she
 " knows she hath, and *this*, (as well it
 " may) causes these great Expressions of
 " her Love, and Joy, and Gratitude;
 " mixed with a Holy Sorrow and Con-
 " trition. But as for *thee* who thinkest
 " thou standest in little or no need of
 " Pardon, or if thou didst, wouldst dis-
 " dain to receive a Promise of it from *me*;
 " therefore thy *Love's* as little to me, and
 " thou hast express'd thy self according-
 " ly. *Her* Debt was great, and she
 " own'd it, and was deeply sensible of
 " her utter Inability to discharge it;
 " and therefore was the *more* sensible of
 " the Mercy of having it freely forgiven
 " her, and hath made a suitable return
 " of Thankfulness and Love. But *thine*,
 " thou

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"thou thinkest is *small*, if *any*; and there-
 fore *thou* art but *little* affected with
 the Promise I make of forgiveness up-
 on thy belief in me, and deemest thy
 self but little obliged to me for it: tho'
 were thy Debt as small as *thou thinkest*
 it to be, *thou* likewise art as utterly un-
 able to discharge it of thy self, as she
 was.

After this, Jesus again and *v. 48, 50.*
 again assured the Woman of her
 Pardon; and said unto her, *thy Sins are*
forgiven, Thy Faith hath saved thee, go in
Peace. Thus did the Son of God imitate
 his most Merciful Father, in kindly re-
 ceiving all that truly turn to him from the
 evil of their doings; in cherishing and
 encouraging Repentance, and not break-
 ing the bruised Reed, nor quenching the
 smoking Flax; and in making the Heart
 that was broken to rejoyce. Thus was
 a penitent Sinner preferred before a high
 Minded Pharisee, with all his outward
 Shews of Holiness; and he that exalted
 himself was abased, and she that Hum-
 bled her self was Exalted.

Having thus shewn the Occasion of
 this *Parable*, together with the true mean-
 ing of it, and the Context relating to it;
 I might, in discoursing upon it, shew the
 Greatness of the Debt, that, as Sinners,
 lies upon the Best of us; and our utter
 Ina-

Inability of our selves ever to discharge it; and the wonderous Goodness and Mercy of God in so freely remitting it, thro' Jesus Christ: But having formerly considered these Particulars up.

Vol. I. on the *Parable of the merciful King*, Mat. 28. 23. I shall now only shew what *Return* we should make for such great and undeserved Grace and Favour, as the compassionate God hath been pleased to shew us, thro' the Sufferings and Mediation of his Blessed Son; what Love and Gratitude, what true Contrition and Compunction of Spirit it ought to cause in us, and how this Godly Sorrow, and this Gratitude and Love, should influence our Lives and Conversations.

And what less than such Affections as these, should be excited by this wondrous Mercy and Goodness of God to us thro' Christ? who forgave us so vast a Debt when we had nothing to pay, and restor'd us to a state of Grace and Favour with him, from a State of Wrath, and endless Woe, which we were in before! This, as it should work in us the greatest Degrees of *Shame* and *Sorrow*, and sharpest *Remorse*, for the base Returns we have made to so Good a God, our greatest Benefactor and best Friend; whose Will we still oppose, whose Holy and Just

Laws

Laws we still Transgress, and whose Great Enemy we still join with against him, notwithstanding all his Kindness constantly shewn to us: So it should give us such a charming Idea of the Excellency of the Divine Mercy to such ungrateful wicked Creatures as we are; as should set our Breasts all on a Flame with the Ardours of Divine *Love*; admiring and adoring that Love of God to *us*, which passeth knowledge, and gratefully devoting our whole selves to his Service for the future. And this will Increase and Perfect our *Repentance*; for 'tis such *Godly Sorrow* as this, proceeding from the *Love* of our Heavenly Father, and a feeling Sense of his Mercy and Goodness to *us*;

that *worketh Repentance to Salvation never to be repented of*, when we reflect upon our horrid Baseness and Ingratitude to *him*.

And the truer our *Repentance* is, the greater will be our *Love*; the more deeply and intimately sensible we are of the greatness and vileness of our Sins, and the dreadful Consequences of them, the more ardently shall we Love, and Bless that infinite Goodness, which hath delivered us from the Guilt, the Power and Punishment of them, and reconcil'd us to himself by the Blood of his dear Son.

These were the Passions which caus'd those Floods of Tears which this converted Sinner poured out upon the Feet of her Saviour: With this Pathetic Mixture of Sorrow and Shame, and Love and Gratitude, and Holy Purposes and Resolutions for the time to come, was her Soul fill'd, after the happy Change was made in it, by the Grace of God. And thus should it be with us, who partake of the same Mercy, from the same most Compassionate Good Being, who desireth not the Death of any Sinner, how Great and Provoking soever, but rather that he may turn from his Wickedness and live.

But how should this Love and Gratitude of ours, this Contrition and Compunction of Spirit, Influence our Lives and Conversations? True Love and Gratitude will not be idle, but always doing something that shall express the sincerity of those Affections, according to the Person's best Ability; and true Repentance is no barren thing, but must and will be continually bringing forth *Fruits that* *John 3. 8.* *are Meet and Proper for it:* And what those genuine Fruits of Repentance are, and what those Expressions of Love and Gratitude, we shall now consider. To begin with the Fruits of *Repentance.*

I. The

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1. The first of which that I shall mention is, the penitent Sinner's humble, free and entire *Confession* of his past great Wickedness to God, without endeavouring to Lessen or Excuse it, and unfeign'd Detestation of it, and firm Resolution of forsaking it for ever after; And when the Soul is deeply affected with true Shame and Grief for Sin, and repents in Earnest, this will naturally follow. For true Repentance is a *Contrition*, or breaking of the Heart of a Sinner, upon Account of his past Vileness, and base Ingratitude to his good God. Now, can we suppose that one of a truly broken Spirit would endeavour to conceal or extenuate those Sins which he so heartily grieves for, and condemns himself for having committed? Men use to Palliate and Lessen Faults that they don't intend to part with, and consequently don't indeed Repent of: but he that is fully convinced in his Judgment, of the great Wickedness of his Sins, and is in earnest resolved to leave them utterly, will readily acknowledge the inexcusable Turpitude of them, even before *Men*, much more before the Searcher of all Hearts, and against whom he hath chiefly offended. And no better Plea, or more acceptable Apology can a Sinner make for himself to God, than this; Nay,

'tis the only one that will stand him in any stead. For to endeavour to hide his Guilt, or make it less than indeed it is, and set a fair Gloss upon his Wicked Actions, or at least take off some of the Deformity of them by Artful Methods of Extenuation; this is not only Vain and Foolish, because all things lie naked and open to the Eyes of God, who sees the inmost Secrets of our Souls, and knows all our Designs, and Intentions, and is acquainted with all the Circumstances and Aggravations of our Sins better than we our selves; but 'tis highly *Provoking* too, as if we thought God might be impos'd upon by a fair smooth Story, and his Justice blinded by the Arts of Oratory, and his Vengeance diverted by the Plea of Unavoidable Infirmary and Surprise, and such like thin Coverings of Guilt: and 'tis a certain Sign too, that the Sinner is far from being so Humble and so Penitent as he should be, when he stands thus upon his own Defence and Vindication.

But he that with Shame and Confusion of Face prostrates himself at the Feet of *Jesus*, as the Woman here in the Gospel did, and there lays open all his Vileness without Reserve, and Bemoans and Laments it, with bitter Sighs and Tears;

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that labours for no Excuses or Palliations of it, and confesses not the *Fact* only, but the *Iniquity* of the *Fact*, and acknowledges himself worthy of the fiercest Anger of God, that he deserves no Favour, nor can hope for any, but thro' his Saviour's Sufferings for him, and the Merit of his Blood; and so casts himself intirely upon the Divine Mercy, with Repeated and most sincere Resolutions, that he will serve him more faithfully for the time to come: *He* that doth thus, shews that he is a Penitent indeed, that he truly Detests and Loaths his *Sin*, as well as fears the *Punishment* of it, and desires to be *Cleans'd* as well as *Pardon'd*. And to such a One, God will be very Gracious, and blot out all his Iniquities and Remember them no more; provided he continues in this Good Mind, and does not relapse again into his vicious Courses. *If we say that we have no Sin*, says St. John, *we deceive our selves, and the Truth is not in us; but if we confess our Sins, God is Faithful and Just to forgive us our Sins, and to cleanse us from all Unrighteousness*; to which agrees that of the wise King; *He that covereth his Sins shall not Prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them, shall have Mercy.*

1 John. 1.
8. 9.

Pro. 28. 13.

To what has been said of a Sinner's thus confessing his Sins to *God*, it may not be amiss to add something concerning Confession to those that represent him here in Spiritual Things, the Ministers of Religion; which together with absolution where it may be had, tho' for very good Reasons our Church does not think necessary to Salvation, as the Church of *Rome* does, yet recommends

* See the first Exhortation in the Communion Office, before the Celebration; and the Rubric in the Office for visiting the Sick, just before the Absolution.

to all Penitents, as of very great Use and Benefit in the most Important Work of Repentance, especially in their Approaches to the Holy Sacrament, and the time of Sickness and Danger of Death *

For *Repentance*, being absolutely necessary to Salvation, (tho' Auricular Confession is not) and there being so many fatal Mistakes daily made about it; it is certainly the wisest Course, in this as well as other Cases of the greatest Concern and Difficulty, to have the Assistance of Persons that are best able to direct us to true and safe Measures. Now such, in Affairs of Religion, are the *Clergy*, who are by God constituted the Guides of our Souls, and who by their constant Attendance to

things

things of this Nature, may well be supposed to have a greater insight into them, than those whose Business lies another Way; and may likewise hope for a peculiar Blessing from God, in the conscientious Discharge of what he hath made their Duty. We are generally apt to be too *Partial* to our selves, and judge too favourably of our own Actions, and so may let That pass with a very slight Animadversion, which yet indeed deserves the smartest Correction, and deepest Sorrow; and some there are on the other hand, (tho' but few) that are too *severe*, and pass a more dreadful Sentence upon themselves than God will pass, and sink into despair, when really they have great Reason to hope well: so that very often (as to the State of our Spiritual, as well as bodily Health,) *another* may give a truer Judgment of our Condition than we our selves, and be of great Use to us. Now, who so fit to be that *other*, as he that by God's Providence is particularly set over us for that purpose, to *watch for our Souls*, and Administer whatever is needful to preserve them to Eternal Life; or some one of the same Holy Function, who acts by the same Authority, and of whose Prudence and Ability in such Matters we have Reason to be well satisfied?

But now ; how can a Man direct in an Affair, that he knows little or nothing of ? How can a Physician be expected to cure a Distemper that is conceal'd from him ? How can a Surgeon Heal a Deep and Dangerous Wound, that he has not seen, and search'd to the Bottom ? He may give present Ease it may be by some general Application, but if he proceed no further it may be Mortal for all that.

So in the Diseases, the Wounds and Bruises, and Putrifying Sores of the Soul, for which Repentance, joyn'd with True Faith, is the only Remedy ; unless the Ghostly Physician knows what 'tis that Wounds and Waits the Conscience, and has it without Reserve laid open to him, how can he judge of its Malignity ? and consequently must be mightily at a loss how to apply himself to the Cure. How can I tell that such a one has a truly Godly Sorrow for his Sins, and such as will work *Repentance to Salvation*, unless I am particularly inform'd what his Sins have been ? And if I don't know what Judgment to give of his Repentance, how can I ease his Mind of the Scruples, the Fears, and Uncertainties that perplex him, and administer true, solid, lasting Comfort to him, and relieve the Agonies of his anxious Soul ? some general Discourses may perhaps skin over the Wounds of his Con-
sci-

science, and give him a little Quiet for a while: But in the mean time they will but grow worse *within*, and soon become more painful and dangerous than ever.

Thus we may in brief see of what great Use and Benefit, particular Confession of Sins to the Ministers of Religion is; how they must proceed in the Dark without it, and the Sinners Soul lose the great Advantage of their Wise and Pious Directions in a matter of the greatest Concern in the World, and in which, if a Man miscarries, he is miserable for ever.

And therefore I can't but seriously recommend it, as our Church does, to every Christian; especially upon the Bed of Languishing, when their great Change draws nigh. And let not Shame deprive us of one of the greatest Comforts of Religion, the Advice and Assistance of our Spiritual Guides, at a time when we shall stand in need of all the Helps that can be, to promote our Eternal Salvation. And if Shame would not keep us from getting the best Help, and submitting to it, should our Bodies be in danger by never so vile and shameful a Disease; methinks Shame should by no means make us run the Hazard of the
Eter-

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Eternal Loss of our Souls, rather than
disclose the Diseases of them in order to
their Cure.

Besides, which will affect us with the
greatest Shame think we, the making
known our Sins to one Grave, Discreet
and Good Person, that he may assist us
in our Repentance, and the clearing our
Consciences of their Guilt; or their be-
ing exposed to all the World at the Day
of Judgment, to our everlasting Shame
and Confusion? And therefore, if the
Comparatively little Shame that will be
caus'd by the former (and which indeed
is so far from being really a Shame to us,
that 'tis our great Commendation) if this
will prevent the intolerable Shame and
Torment of the latter, (as 'tis very pro-
bable it will) methinks of the two Shames
we should choose that, which is beyond
Comparison the least. And thus much
for the first Fruit of sincere Repentance, an
Humble, Free, and Full Confession of our
past Wickednesses, and that not to God
only, but to those Holy Persons who have
the Care of our Souls committed to them
by him, and are his Substitutes in the
great Affair of guiding us to a Happy
Eternity.

II. A second Fruit of True Repentance will be great Carefulness and *Circumspection* to avoid all Appearance of Sin, that greatest of Evils, for the Future; those Sins especially which the Penitent formerly committed with the greatest Gust and Pleasure, and which now so gall his Conscience and disturb his Mind.

For no Man that sincerely and heartily condemns himself for such and such an Action, and is really ashamed of it, and truly grieved and sorry for it, from a deep and feeling Sense of its Baseness and Vileness, and Inexcusable Wickedness; but will be exceeding watchful against all Temptations to it for the Future, and studiously avoid everything that might probably lead to a fresh Commission of it.

As suppose, a Man that had been a Rebel and a Traitor to a most Gracious and Beneficent Prince, should at length be touched with so deep a Sense of his vile Ingratitude, in returning so much Evil for such great Goodness, and should feel such stinging Remorse in his Mind, as not to be at rest till he had humbled himself to to his injur'd Sovereign, and obtain'd his Pardon, and his usual Countenance, firmly resolving to be inflexibly Dutiful
and

and Loyal to him for the time to come; and suppose the Prince's Lenity to be so great as to admit him again to his Presence and his Favour; Don't we think, that as long as his Resolution of Allegiance and Fidelity held firm, he would be extremely careful to break off all Correspondence with his former Gang, and be deaf to all Seditious Whispers, Murmurings and Complaints, and like a Good Subject endeavour Faithfully to discharge his own Duty, and employ his Mind only upon that? This certainly is the Course, that one who truly repents of his Rebellion against his Prince would take, to prevent his being decoy'd into it again; and such also will be the Behaviour of a hearty Penitent, for his vile Ingratitude in Rebelling against the Infinitely good Majesty of Heaven.

Whatever were the particular Instances of his Sin, whoever were the Prompters or Inticers to them and Companions in them, whatever were the Motives and Inducements to them; he will avoid all, as he would the Plague, or even Hell it self; be continually upon his Watch and his Guard, at least at first, in the beginning of his Reformation, and Jealous of every thing that had formerly Ensnared him, lest he should be again surpriz'd, by

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by what he truly hates, and is full resolv-
ed never more to be Guilty of. This is
the Spirit of one that has Repented in
earnest; and he that has it not, will soon
repent of his Repentance, and be as bad
as ever. This is so plain that I need not
insist further upon it, and proceed to a

III. Third Fruit or effect of true Repen-
tance, and that is a Holy *Shame*, Displea-
sure, and *Indignation* at our selves, when-
ever we look back upon our past Wick-
ednesses, as we should often do; (for tho'
God is pleas'd in Mercy to forget them,
yet we should have them often in Re-
membrance) we should be so far from re-
flecting upon them with any Pleasure and
Satisfaction, that as our Church expres-
ses it, *the Remembrance of them should be*
grievous unto us, and we should Detest
and Abhor our selves for becoming so
Vile as ever to commit them, and con-
demn our selves as worthy of all those
Punishments that God has threatned to
inflict by Reason of them.

For, whatever a Man really looks up-
on as a vile and shameful Action, he will
naturally be angry with himself, for hav-
ing been Guilty of it; and nothing that
we are thoroughly asham'd of, can be re-
membred with Delight and Complacen-
cy,

cy, but will rather grate and vex the Mind, and cause a Sigh and a Tear rather than a smile. And therefore when a Sinner is become so truly sensible of the Baseness and Ingratitude of his former Vicious Courses, as to Repent of them in earnest; whenever he looks back upon them it will be with self Abhorrency and

Rom. 6. 21.

Indignation, and a Blush. And consequently he that can call to Mind, and relate to others his sinful Extravagancies, by way of Mirth and Pleasantry, and takes Delight in doing so; 'tis plain he is not so thoroughly asham'd of them as he should be, and therefore does not heartily repent of his having committed them: for what Men truly repent of, they are asham'd of too, and Shame is a troublesome uneasy Passion, and naturally causes self-Abhorrency and Condemnation. So that, tho' a Man may have left off to commit some Sins, and will say, it may be, that he sees the Folly of them, and cry *God forgive me*, when he speaks of them, and the like; yet if he's pleas'd and tickled at the mention of them, and loves to talk of this and that piece of Lewdness and Debauchery which he acted formerly: 'tis a very ill Sign that *His Heart is not yet right in him, that he is still in the Gall of Bitterness,* and

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the Bond of Iniquity; and that some present ill Consequence of his Vices, or want of Ability to practise them, or some other Consideration of that Nature, is the reason of his not doing as he has done, rather than a real hatred of the Sins as *such*: For then, the Remembrance of them would cause much Shame, and Indignation, and inward Regret, and Holy Anger, and vexation at himself for acting at so base and vile a rate; it being as impossible for a true Penitent to be delighted with the Thoughts of his past Wickednesses, as it is, for a Man to love what he abhors.

4. Another Fruit of True Repentance, and which will naturally follow that which I mentioned last, is what *St. Paul* styles *spiritual Revenge*; *2 Cor. 7.11.* that is, the subduing and keeping under, by prudent Severities, those unruly Affections of the Body, which betrayed the Sinner into so much Mischief, and caus'd him so much Shame and Sorrow and bitterest Remorse: And where there is true self-indignation, Abhorrency, and Condemnation, there will be *self-Punishment* too. For what Men detest and Abominate, and are truly angry at, they would Punish if they could, and those

those that have Power and Authority do actually revenge and punish; and accordingly St. Paul calls the Civil Magistrate, who hath the Power of the Sword committed to him by God, *A Revenger to execute Wrath on him that doth Evil*, and which if he neglects to do, he betrays his Trust, and connives at Evil, and *bears the Sword in vain*. And therefore, as every Man is authorized by God to Correct *himself* for whatever he finds amiss, and is obliged to do so by several express Commands of Christianity; so, whoever is truly mov'd with Indignation against himself for such and such Wickednesses, and condemns himself as worthy of severe Chastisement for having committed them, will exercise this Power of *self-Revenge*, and mortify the Deeds of the Body, with its disorderly Appetites and Lusts, denying its irregular Cravings, and bringing it into Subjection to the Spirit.

As to the Methods and Measure of this Discipline, 'tis too copious a Subject to be insisted on at the End of a Discourse; but in general, it should be more or less severe, according to the nature of the Sins for which the Man is to Punish himself, and likewise

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according to the Constitution and Temper of the Sinner.

All Men are not able to bear the like Rigourous Treatment, nor do all Sins deserve the like, nor all Mens Bodies stand in need of the like; and in some, 'tis the *Spirit* that wants to be humbled more than the *Flesh*, the *Pride* and *Arrogancy* of which, the Exercise of Bodily Severities would heighten rather than bring down. And therefore this kind of Discipline must be manag'd with great Prudence and Discretion, by those that would reap the full Benefit of it.

But tho' it must be *regulated*, yet it must not be wholly *omitted*, and *will* not be, when a Man is throughly a Penitent; and he that spares himself, when he so well deserves Punishment, shews that he loves his lower self too well, and hates his Sin too little, to deserve the Character of a sincere and hearty Convert, and one that has out of a truly Godly Sorrow repented to Salvation.

This is the only Revenge that is allowed of by our Holy Religion, and 'tis not allowed only, but enjoyn'd; and the Reason is, because there is no Malice or Ill-will in it but against *Sin* (for to the Sinner 'tis the greatest *Kindness* in the World) and against Sin we can't be too bitter and

implacable. And as great a share as Love and Charity, and Tenderneſs, and Forgiveness have in the Christian Institution, he that is not in this Sense acted with Hatred and Revenge, and does not even *Crucify* his Rebellious Flesh, when there is just Occasion, can never be Christ's true Disciple.

Having thus mentioned some of the Fruits of sincere *Repentance*, and such, as where they are without Dissimulation, will be attended with a through Reformation and Amendment of Life; we shall now consider how the *Love and Gratitude* of a True Penitent ought to express themselves when he is become duly sensible of the Greatness of his past Sins, and of the Divine Mercy and Goodness in pardoning him, and admitting him to his Favour upon his true Repentance.

1. And *first*, they will express themselves in earnest Desires of *Continuing* in God's Favour, and of such Assistances of his Good Spirit, as will enable the Penitent to be intirely Obedient to his Righteous Commands for the Future.

'Tis natural for a Man to desire to please those whom he truly loves, and when he is admitted again to a Friendship that he highly values, and which he once had forfeited by base ungrateful Actions,

ons, he will covet nothing more than to perfect that Reconciliation, by the most acceptable Services he can perform.

The grateful Sense he has of the Goodness of his offended Friend, who, tho' he has done so unworthily by him, has yet so readily pass'd by all upon his Acknowledgment of his Fault, and Sorrow for it, as to take him again into his Affection and Esteem; this will make him industriously careful to make use of every Opportunity of making some Return, and glad when it lies in his Power, and really troubled if his Ability will not answer his Desires.

And thus will our Love and Gratitude, if they be sincere, express themselves towards God, and our Blessed Saviour Jesus. Thus shall we make it our great Business to keep our selves in their Favour, whom we have such Infinite Reason to love above all things, and to whom we are so wondrously obliged. And if we find our selves unable (as who but does?) to express our Love and Gratitude to our Divine Friend and Benefactor as we ought; how should we fly by earnest Prayer to the Fountain of spiritual Strength, for his Assistance! begging him with great Importunity to help our Infirmities, to supply what is wanting in our own poor weak

Ability, and in some measure put us into a Capacity of rendering a suitable Return, and keeping up that Friendship inviolate which we have the greatest Reason to value above our very Lives.

What can a truly grateful Breast that's deeply sensible of the Goodness of God to Sinners, and full of unfeigned Love to him again, more earnestly desire than this? And therefore, where such Desires are wanting, and the Man continues as cool and indifferent and regardless of any thing of this Nature, as formerly; he must not look upon himself to be so thoroughly Apprehensive of the Divine Mercy to him as a true Penitent should be, who when really grieved and wearied with the burden of his Sins, has found a Compassionate Deliverer that hath eas'd him of it; and he may and ought to conclude, that having so little sign of Love and Gratitude in his Soul, he has as little of sincere Repentance.

2. *Secondly*, A Sinner that has repented in earnest, and is affected with true Love and Gratitude for the great Mercy of God to him in Christ Jesus, will be under the constant *Awe*, of a Reverential respectful *Fear* of offending him; such as is that of an obedient Child towards an Indulgent Father, or of Loyal Subjects towards a Prince

Prince they love. And this will be very evident if we represent it thus. Suppose a Child that has been very undutiful, to a very kind, wise and good Parent, should afterwards become sensible of his Baseness and Ingratitude, in making so ill a Requital to a Father that had been indeed a Father to him, and shewn the tenderest Care of him in all Respects from his very Infancy ; and be at length so thoroughly affected with this Consideration, as to condemn himself as guilty of a most heinous Fault, and resolve for the Future to amend it, and accordingly humbles himself to his offended Father, promising to behave himself with all Obedience and Dutiful Respect to him for the Future, and thereby obtains his Father's Pardon, and his Blessing, and is received again into Favour : Will he not, if he has been in earnest all this while, observe all his Father's Commands with the greatest Regard and Reverence, and be so fearful of failing in his Duty, and again incurring his Father's Displeasure, as with the greatest Diligence, and Exactness to perform his Will ? And will not this affectionate Fear bear proportion with his former Disobedience and Undutifulness, and his Father's Goodness in forgiving him ; and proceeding from Love and Gratitude, as well as

Interest, be sincere, and hearty, and lasting? Certainly it will. And he that pretends to be sorry for his former Faults, and yet has as little Regard to his Father's Commands as ever, and stands in fear of nothing but Correction, and it may be not much of that neither; can never make any Wise Man believe, that he was ever truly grieved for his past Undutifulness, or has any true Love for his Father, or grateful Sense of his repeated Goodness to him.

And just thus is it in a Sinner's Repentance for his Undutifulness to his Father which is in Heaven. He that is a true Penitent, and as such, is assur'd of Forgiveness through Christ, and has a grateful Sense of that great and undeserved Mercy, and feels the Love of his Good and Gracious God, and most compassionate Redeemer, shed abroad in his Heart; need not be told that he must be afraid of displeasing him again, that he must have an awful Regard to all the Expresses of his Will, and serve him with Reverence and Godly Fear. He has something within him that will Prompt him to this more effectually, than any outward Exhortations can do; Ten Thousand of which will signify but little, where there is not a Principle of true Love

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Love and Gratitude within. And therefore, he that knows no other Fear of God than as an Avenger, and dreads nothing but the Punishments he has threatened to inflict upon obstinate Sinners, and pays him sometimes a little forc'd Obedience upon that score only; this Man is a great Stranger to that Love and Gratitude which flows from Repentance to Salvation, and consequently as great a Stranger to that Repentance too; and 'till he finds that he has a filial reverential Fear of God, and stands in awe of him as good Children do of a kind Father, and keeps from offending him, because he loves him, and values his Favour above all things, and looks upon unthankfulness to him as the Dregs of base Ingratitude: 'Till he find himself thus affected towards God, whatever dread he may sometimes have of his *Vengeance*, and be scar'd by it now and then from the commission of a Vice; he is no true Penitent, and will not be esteemed as such by God. For very bad Men may and do fear him at such a rate as this, and yet continue as profligate and bad as ever; and a Sinner may be afraid of Damnation, (and he's a hardned Wretch indeed that is not) and yet love God never the more, nor his Sins ever the less,

and after all, be actually damned for them at last.

3. In the last place, the Love and Gratitude of a true Penitent to his Merciful God and Saviour, will engage him not only in a Heedful, but a *Zealous* Performance of Religious Duties for the future ; that he may make some small Amends, by a more than ordinary *Warmth* and *Fervour* in them, for his past Transgressions, and Coldness, and Neglects, and Redeem his mispent Time by double Diligence. Thus would we do by an offended Prince, a Parent or a Friend, whose Favour we are very desirous perfectly to regain ; and endeavour to recommend our selves to them by more than ordinary Services, and be *Zealous* Promoters of their Honour and their Interest : that so we may recover our forfeited Reputation, and demonstrate the Sincerity of our Sorrow for what is past, and in some measure make Attonement for it.

And therefore, if we find it otherwise with respect to *God*, and are as indifferent and cool as ever in the Service of the injured and offended Majesty of Heaven, who is our Divine Parent, and best and greatest Friend, and of whose Mercy we have had such great Experience :

How

How can we think that our Hearts have ever been duly affected either with a sense of our sad Condition when under his Displeasure, or of the Greatness of his Pardoning Goodness, when we have so little Love and Gratitude to him as is not sufficient to make us as Hearty in *his* Service, as we would be in that of an earthly Prince, or Parent, or Friend, who had received us into Favour again, after we had justly incurred their Anger?

I'm sure the Account we have of the Behaviour of true Penitents in Scripture, and which is recorded for our Imitation, is of another Nature; and *David*, and *Peter*, and *Mary Magdalen*, and the Woman here in the Gospel, were by so much the more Zealous in Religion after their Repentance, as they were forgetful of it before. And nothing can be more reasonable, and becoming a Sinner that Repents in earnest, and has had great Experience of the Infinite Goodness of God in forgiving him his vast Debt when he had *nothing to pay*, but (without Mercy,) must have sunk under it for ever; than to love much, and add Zeal to his Repentance, (as the lukewarm Church of *Laodicea* was advis'd to do, *Rev. 3. 29.*) and employ that Vigour and Heat of Temper in a fervent Devotion, and exemplary

emplary Virtue, which he once abus'd to an eager Pursuit of his Lusts. And as he formerly, to his Shame, had been remarkable for a notorious Sinner, that wrought all uncleanness with greediness; so to make it his Endeavour for the time to come to be as remarkable a Penitent, and as much taken notice of for Righteousness and true Holiness; and like *John the Baptist*, be a Preacher of Repentance to others, and a burning and a shining Light, in the midst of a crooked and perverse Generation. Luke 3. 3, 8. John 5. 35. Eph. 2. 15. This is the best way to confirm our Pardon, so that it shall never be recalled: and if we never repent of our Repentance, but bring forth Fruits worthy of it, with Perseverance, throughout the whole Course of our Life; we may then be assured that the Compassionate God will never repent of his shewing Mercy to us, who desireth not the Death of a Sinner, but rather that he may turn from his Wickedness, and live.

The

The PRAYER.

I.

*“ALmighty and Everlasting
“ God, who hatest nothing
“ that thou hast made, and dost
“ forgive the Sins of all them that are Peni-
“ tent, create and make in us new and con-
“ trite Hearts ; that we worthily lamenting
“ our Sins, and acknowledging our Wretch-
“ edness, may obtain of thee the God of all
“ Mercy, perfect Remission and Forgiveness,
“ through Jesus Christ our Lord !*

The Collect
for Ash-Wed-
nesday.

*Thou Lord, art full of Compassion, Long-
suffering, and of great Pity ; Thou sparest
when we deserve Punishment, and in thy
Wrath thinkest upon Mercy ; O therefore
grant that by thy Grace, we may become fit
Objects of Forgiveness, and then we know
we shall receive it of thee !*

II.

*O, How charming are the Thoughts of thy
tender Bowels towards us ! How should they
soften my Spirit, and make my Eyes run
down, with Tears of Penitence and Godly
Sorrow, for my past base Ingratitude to so
good a God !*

*How should I abhor my self, for my A-
buses of thy forbearing Love ! and throwing
my*

my self at thy Feet, with Shame and Confusion of Face, how bitterly should I lament my strange Perverseness to so kind a Parent; in encouraging my self in Disobedience because thy Pity still puts off my Punishment!

O may I never more be guilty of such horrid Baseness, and unaccountable Madness and Folly! But remember that thou art just and Holy, as well as Merciful; and wilt not finally spare the obstinately Guilty!

And may I be so wise, as Immediately to improve the Blessed Opportunity of recovering thy Favour; and not with a hardened Impenitent Heart treasure up Wrath to my self against the day of Wrath! But while 'tis called to day, Hear thy most gracious Voice, which kindly invites me to be Good and Happy!

Thou Lord, hast freely forgiven me a vast Debt, which 'twas impossible for me ever to discharge; O Grant, that I may love thee infinitely for it, and have thy Praises ever in my Mouth! and manifest the Truth of my Gratitude and Repentance, by dedicating my self from henceforth, and for ever, intirely to thy Service! And do thou mercifully accept my best, tho' poor Endeavours, through Jesus Christ, my Saviour and Redeemer! Amen, Amen.

P A R A-

PARABLE VII.

Of the Unclean Spirit's returning.

Luke xi. 24, &c.

*When the Unclean Spirit is gone out of a Man, he walketh through dry Places, seeking Rest; and finding none, He saith, I will return unto mine House whence I came out, and when he cometh he findeth it [*empty] swept, * Mat. 12. 44. and garnished.*

Then goeth he and taketh to him seven other Spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that Man is worse than the first. [Even so shall it be also unto this wicked Generation.] * Mat. 12. 45.*

IN the 22d Verse of the 12th Chapter of St. Matthew, and the 14th Verse of this 11th of St. Luke, we are told, that there was brought to our Lord one possessed with a Devil, blind and dumb; and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw, to the great Wonder

Wonder and Amazement of the People ; who thereupon concluded him to be *the Son of David*, the great Messias that was then expected. But the envious spiteful Pharisees, who were resolv'd not to be convinc'd of that great Truth themselves, and as much as in them lay to keep the People from being so ; put this Hellish Gloss upon that Great Miracle, *He casteth out Devils through Beelzebub the chief of the Devils*, v. 15. As if there was a Confederacy between that great Deceiver and Christ, to seduce the *Jews* by lying Wonders, from their Obedience to that Law which God gave them by *Moses* ; and impose a new false Religion upon them, under pretence of his being the Messias, when indeed he was no other than a vile Impostor. But this, how plausible soever it might seem at first sight, was indeed so very weak, that none but a bigotted Pharisee, whose Reason was blinded by implacable Hatred and Malice, would e'er have urg'd it ; and our Lord soon made them ashamed of it, if any thing could shame 'em, as we may read in the 17th Verse of this Chapter, and the 25th, and following Verses of the 12. *Matt.* And in the 31st of that Chapter he lays home to their Consciences what an unpardonable Sin they had been guilty of, in blaspheming
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against the Holy Ghost, and ascribing that to the Power of the Devil, made use of to withdraw the People from the true Religion, to their Ruine; which was done by the Assistance of the good Spirit of God, on purpose that they might be inclined by it to embrace their chief Happiness, and believe in *Him* whom the Father of Mercies had sent to be the Saviour of the World. This was the Sin against the Holy Ghost, *Never to be forgiven, neither in this World, nor in the World to come*; that is, to all Eternity, *Matt. 12. 31.* And it argu'd such resolv'd wilful Blindness against all Conviction, such inflexible Stubbornness and Obstinacy against all the Gracious Methods that God took for the Salvation of Mankind; and was so manifest a joining with the Devil in doing what they could to frustrate and disappoint that great good Work which the compassionate God sent his Divine Son into the World to accomplish, that nothing could be more provoking, and more deserve God's irreconcilable Displeasure. There was so much of the Temper of Hell in it, such Devilish Enmity both to God and Man; envying God the Glory, and Man the Happiness of the Redemption design'd the World by Christ; that it was but just for ever to exclude such Wretches from it, and
give

give them up to a Diabolical *Hardness of Heart*, as they had given themselves up before to a near Resemblance of that cursed Spirit, in other Hellish Dispositions of Soul.

What sort of People are guilty of this unpardonable Sin *now*, is sometimes made a Question ; and we need not look far for them in this Atheistical Infidel Age. How many there are among us that ridicule our Saviour, and his Miracles, stile him an Impostor, and his wondrous Works no other than Juggles and Delusions, every one knows too well. And if to think, and openly to talk at this rate ; to persist in such vile Opinions, and publickly to maintain and justify 'em, and make it their great endeavour to gain Profelytes to them ; if this be not the *very* Sin against the Holy Ghost, I'm sure 'tis next door to it : And the hardned Obstinacy of those that have been guilty of it, against all the Reason and Argument that can be used to bring them off, and to which they can make no material Objection that has not been baffled and confounded over and over ; this looks as if they were given up for it to a Reprobate Sense, and under an irrevocable Condemnation. I pray God those that are this way inclined, may seriously consider this, before they proceed

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too far, and *out-wit* themselves of their Salvation beyond Recovery ! But to proceed,

After our Lord had silenced the Objection of his casting out Devils thro' the Assistance of the Prince of the Devils, *Certain of the Scribes and Pharisees* attack'd him, *Mat. 12. 38.* being extremely nettled that their first Charge was so much to their own Shame ; and were urgent with him to shew them *a sign from Heaven*, *Luke 11. 16.* that they might be satisfy'd 'twas *God* had sent him, and enabled him to do what he did, and not the *Infernal Powers*.

Now by *a sign from Heaven*, I suppose they meant, some strange Præternatural Appearance of the Heavenly Bodies, at his Command (as when the Sun and Moon at the Command of *Joshua* stood still, *Josh. 10. 12, 13. 2 Kings 20. 11.* and went ten Degrees backward at the Prayer of *Isaiah*, *Isa. 38. 8.*) or else some sudden Thunder, and God's speaking articulately from above, to assure them that he came from him, and the like ; Instances of which having been in the time of *Moses* and the Prophets, they expected the same, or something of like Nature from him then.

But this unreasonable Curiosity of theirs, after he had already wrought enough unquestionable Miracles to satisfy any unpre-

judiced Person, he did not think fit at that time to gratify ; tho' afterwards we find God spake to him at his Request audibly from Heaven, in a Voice like Thunder, *John 12. 28, &c* (as he had done before at his Baptism, saying, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, Mat. 3. 17.*) and the Sun was strangely darkned at the Time of his Death, *Luke 23. 44, 45.* when the Moon was in the Full, which is contrary to the usual Course of Nature, and was never known to be so before nor since : But he then refused to comply with their Desire, knowing their Intention was only to *Nonplus* him if they could, not that they had a mind to be convinc'd themselves, which a thousand Signs would not have done, they were so obstinately set against him. And therefore, instead of an evident Sign from Heaven, he in a Mystical manner told them of a Sign they should hereafter have from the Earth (and which when rightly understood, would be the most convincing Sign of all, *v. 29. 30.*) namely, that *as Jonas was three Days and three Nights in the Whale's Belly, so the Son of Man should be three Days and three Nights in the Heart of the Earth, Mat. 12. 40.* by which he foretold (tho' they apprehended him not) his Resurrection after three Days Burial : Though even *that* we see by the Event,

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Event, was not able to convince the Priests, and Scribes, and Pharisees, *Mat.* 27. 62, &c. 28.—II, &c. *V.* 31, 32.

Having said this, with some other things relating to the Happiness the People of that Age had in enjoying the Presence of the Messiah, and how inexcusable they would be for rejecting him, and treating him as they did, and how dreadful the consequence would be at last ; he endeavours to make them more apprehensive of it, by speaking the Parable above recited, with Allusion to his casting out the evil Spirit, which had occasioned the whole intermediate Discourse. *When the unclean Spirit is gone out of a Man, he walketh through dry places, &c. and the last state of that Man is worse than the first, even so shall it be also unto this wicked Generation.* As if he had said,

“ Like as when the Devil is cast out of
 “ a poor Wretch that was possessed by
 “ him, he is enrag’d, and endeavours if
 “ possible to return, and take a new Sei-
 “ zure of his miserable Prey ; which if he
 “ effects, he tyrannizes more than ever,
 “ and is not to be ejected again but with
 “ the greatest Difficulty : So this wicked
 “ Generation, which hath so happy an
 “ opportunity of being entirely delivered
 “ by me from the sad Bondage of Satan,

“ and the vile Slavery of their Lusts, and
 “ restored to the glorious Liberty of the
 “ Children of God, and which they see I
 “ am able to accomplish by the manifest
 “ Power I have over the Spirits of Dark-
 “ ness, and which those evil Spirits are in
 “ constant dread of; this wicked Genera-
 “ tion, I say, if it refuseth so great Mercy,
 “ will be more enslav’d to those cruel Ty-
 “ rants than before: Who will domineer
 “ it intolerably when this Danger that
 “ threatens them is over; and my coming
 “ to save the World, will if it rejects me,
 “ but add to its future Misery.

Having thus seen the occasion and
 meaning of this Parable, we proceed now
 to consider the several Parts of it, and
 apply it to our selves.

*When the unclean Spirit is gone out of a
 man, he walketh through dry places, seeking
 Rest, and finding none.*— That the Devil
 and his Angels are call’d *Foul and Unclean
 Spirits* in the New Testament, can’t but
 be observ’d by every one; and the reason
 is, that we may be rightly inform’d in the
 nature of them, and know what designs
 they have upon us in their Temptations,
 and what will be the Consequence of our
 listning to them. They are the great Ene-
 mies of every thing that is Holy, and Pure,
 and Good; and are made up of *Spiritual*
Fil.

Filthiness, such as Pride and Envy, Malice and Cruelty, Hatred and Revenge, Ingratitude, Falshood and Deceit : And their business is to make us as foul and impure as themselves, to pollute our Souls with vile Affections, obscene, wicked and prophane thoughts, to engage us in a Course of Irreligion and Vice, to corrupt our Principles, and make us live as without God in the World ; and in short, to make us as Devilish in our Temper and Disposition, as brutish in our Lives, and as much at Enmity with God, and Virtue, as they can. That so they may bring Dishonour upon the Divine Majesty, Contempt upon Religion, and Shame and Misery upon Mankind in this World ; and at last rejoice in their Eternal Torment with themselves in Hell.

Now this they do by working upon our Fancy and Imagination, and filling our Minds with vain, impure and impious Images and Representations ; and all the while giving them a false turn, and recommending them under the Appearance of Pleasure, or Honour, or Wealth and Greatness, as Satan serv'd our Lord himself, when he drew a most charming Landskape of the Glories of the World, and plac'd it before him, and told him, *All this will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me*, Mat. 4. 9.

And when we are thus prepar'd, then they help us to Opportunity and ill Advice and Example ; and still keep plying our Fancy, by raising mighty Hopes and Expectations in us, and painting it with delightful Scenes of wonderful Happiness from such and such Enjoyments, and such a way of Life.

By this means they endeavour to engage us in what will be our Ruine ; and with Hellish Cunning make us their Tools to do their Work upon our selves, and bring about our own Destruction : And all the while bubble us into an Opinion, that 'tis all out of Kindness to us, to make us enjoy our selves, and live pleasantly, and be happy.

But let us remember that they are *Unclean Spirits*, earnestly bent upon making us as wicked and as miserable as themselves ; and let us scorn to be so shamefully impos'd upon by them. And whenever we find our Fancy roving after sensual, or any other sinful Objects, and our Thoughts taken up with impure Imaginations, and we feel our selves begin to be delighted with them ; let us summon up all our Reason and our Religion to resist their Insinuations and drive them out : And fly to God by Prayer for his Protection, as earnestly as if we saw one of those foul Fiends in the

the most frightful Shape, coming to seize upon us. For this *imaginary* Impiety will soon grow into a strong Desire of completing it by Action; and our great Enemy will take Care that no Encouragement shall be wanting from Company, and suitable Objects, and Conveniency, and then 'tis usually too late to bethink our selves; the Violence of the Temptation will be so great as to take full Possession of us, and hurry us on impetuously to actual Sin. And then how does the Infernal Tyrant triumph over his wretched Prey which he hath thus decoyed into his Net! And how does the wretched Prey, if sensible of its miserable State, bewail and lament its Folly in being seduced by the great Deceiver; and if not sensible of it, then is its Condition most deplorable of all.

How carefully therefore should we avoid even the least Appearance of Evil, and shun the first Tendencies and Inclinations to it, and every wicked Thought and Fancy! Even as carefully as we would avoid and shun the Apparition of an *evil Spirit*; which tho' invisible (Blessed be God) to our Senses, yet is present to our Minds, when we are haunted with impious Suggestions, and vile Imaginations.

But notwithstanding the Watchfulness, and Cunning, and insinuating Arts of these

these dangerous Enemies that lurk so close within us; their Attempts will be in vain, unless we prove treacherous to our selves, and by complying with them provoke our Divine Guardian to leave us to their Mercy. For if God be present with us by the Assistance of his Holy Spirit who can be against us? What can the united Force of all the Spirits of Darkness signify against a Soul that is under the Protection of the Almighty? And *that*, every Soul is, that does its best endeavour to resist the wicked one, trusting in God's Aid, and flying upon all occasions to him for help. Can't *He* think we make as strong Impressions of *Virtue* upon our Minds, as the Devil can of Wickedness and Vice? Can't he draw the Beauty of Holiness upon our Fancy and Imagination with as much Life and Spirit, as the Fiend can paint the Pleasures and Enjoyments of the World, and of Sense? And has not Religion infinitely greater Attractives to those that contemplate it with due Seriousness and Attention, than Sin in its best Dress, and with all the Advantages that can possibly be given it? And are not the Blessed Angels as ready and as able to give us favourable Opportunities of growing in Grace, *Mat.* 18. 10. *Heb.* 1. 14. and improving in true Piety and Goodness, and practising the

Virtues

Virtues that Christ has taught us, and made our Duty ; as the unclean Spirits are to betray us into Vice ? So that indeed, the odds is more than a little on the side of Religion ; and let the Devil and his black Legions oppose it as much as they will, it will thrive and flourish in our Souls, unless we our selves are resolv'd to the contrary, and join with them against it. But if we'll disregard, and it may be obstinately resist the Motions of the good Spirit of God upon our Souls, and be very fond of, and cherish the Insinuations and Injections of the Tempter ; if we'll shut our Eyes and our Ears against every thing that would recommend Virtue and Goodness to us, and employ all our Thoughts upon the Pleasures of Sense, and the Enjoyments of the World, and listen with great Attention and Delight to whatever will blow up our Passions to an ardent Desire, and Prosecution of them ; and greedily embrace all Opportunities of gratifying our Bodily Appetites, and as carelessly neglect whatever tends to the Good of our Souls : If we do at this rate, no wonder if Vice prevails against Virtue, and Earth against Heaven, and the Devil carries us away from God. But we see whom we must blame for it, even our vile, unnatural, ungrateful selves ; and this very Consideration will

will be a great Aggravation of our Misery in Hell, namely, that when we might have fought with great Advantage against our Spiritual Enemies, and as glorious Conquerors triumph'd for ever in the Regions of the Blessed ; we basely deliver'd our selves up into their Power, and chose to follow the great Destroyer in the ways of Sin to that place of endless Torment, rather than to tread in the Blessed Steps of our Redeemer, and in the Paths of Holiness to arrive at Heaven. What weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of Teeth, will be caus'd by such Reflections as these !

This is that, which unclean Spirits do their utmost to bring us to : Whose Hatred is so bitter and implacable against us, because God hath shewn *us* Mercy, when he hath deny'd it to *them* ; that they can never rest but when they are doing something or other that may tend to defeat his gracious Intentions towards us.

Thus in the Parable we are told, that when the unclean Spirit is by the Power of God forc'd to depart out of any Man he has possess'd ; *He walketh through dry places*, roaming about in unfrequented Desarts, and barren lonely Mountains, the usual haunt of Devils, in great Vexation and Discontent, and Rage, at his being depriv'd of an Opportunity he had got of
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recking his Spight and Malice upon one of the hated Race of *Adam*: *Seeking Rest, but finding none*, for all the Satisfaction that the Spirits of Darkneſs are capable of, is in doing Diſhonour to God, and bringing Miſchief and Ruine upon Mankind; and therefore was reſolv'd, if poſſible, to return to the Habitation from whence he was thrown out, *v. 24.* and begin to practice his Hellish Arts of Torment upon the poor Creature again.

Lord, how ſhould we bleſs thee for protecting us from the Affaults and Terrors of theſe Infernal Furies, here in this World; and how ſhould we dread being abandon'd for ever to their unreſtrain'd Cruelty in Hell! And nothing more terrible can be pronounc'd againſt the wicked at the laſt Day, by the great Judge, next to *Depart from ME, ye curſed*; than that which immediately follows, *into Everlaſting Fire, prepar'd for the Devil and his Angels.* For what elſe can be expected from being deliver'd up into the hands and full Power of thoſe merciless Executioners of the Divine Vengeance, and who bear ſuch an inveterate Hatred to us; than all the Tortures that the *Wit* of the Devil can invent, and his *Power* can inflict! And O! How inconceivably Miſerable will be thoſe Wretched Souls, who feel the inward
Stings

Stings and Upbraidings of their own guilty Consciences, at the same time that they endure those other Torments; and reflect with intolerable Anguish, that all this they brought upon themselves, against all that God could do to preserve them from it, but now, must lie down under it to all Eternity!

But as much Satisfaction as evil Spirits take, in seducing us from God, and bringing us to so much Misery, they are all the while heating Hell, that flaming Furnace of God's Wrath, still hotter for *themselves*; and the more Mischief they do here, the greater and more intense shall be their Torments there. For the Fall'n Angels are to be judg'd at the Great Day of Recompence, as well as wicked Men; thus St. Jude expressly saith, *The Angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own Habitation, he hath reserv'd in everlasting Chains under Darkness, unto the Judgment of the Great Day*, Jude 6.

Now every one that appears before that Dread Tribunal, we are assur'd shall be judg'd in *Righteousness*; and if the greatest Sinners amongst Men, shall then be doom'd to a suitable Degree of Punishment, why should it not be so likewise in the Condemnation of wicked Spirits? And that some of them are wickedder than others,

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others, is plain from that Passage in this Parable, where 'tis said, that the Unclean Spirit, when he returned to get Possession again of the House whence he came out, took with him *seven other Spirits* more *wicked than himself*, v. 26. So that 'tis highly probable, as was said, that the more mischievous they are to *us*, the more *Wrath* they do treasure up for themselves against the *Day of Wrath, and Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God*, Rom. 2. 5. And this, if true (as I can see no Reason to doubt but it is) Creatures of such great Knowledge as they are, cannot be ignorant of : But yet so restless is Malice till it has expressed it self to the Hurt of the hated Object of it, and so sweet is Revenge to evil Spirits, as well as to wicked Flesh and Blood ; that they'll greedily execute it to the utmost of their Power, tho' at the same time they know 'twill add to their own Misery at last. So near of Kin are wicked Men and wicked Spirits : So like each other now in Disposition and in evil Practices : And so like shall they be hereafter, in their Condemnation to the endless Pains of Hell. *They are all of their Father the Devil*, as our Lord expresses it, *and the Works of their Father they will do* ; and at length the whole cursed Family shall welter together in Lakes of unquenchable Fire. But to proceed,

When

When the Unclean Spirit was return'd to his former Habitation, he found it *empty, swept, and garnished*; no Opposition was made to his Re-entry, no better Guest receiv'd in his Room, no Watch, no Guard, but all things as 'twere in a readiness for his peaceable Reception. *Then goeth he, full of Joy at so favourable an Opportunity of recovering what he had lost, and taketh with him seven other Spirits more wicked than himself, the better to secure his Possession, and the more effectually to glut his Revenge upon the miserable Wretch for his former Shame and Disappointment; and they enter in, and dwell there, as in their settled Home, and the last state of that Man is worse than the first*: As we may well believe, they would use one that had escap'd their Hands more cruelly than ever.

Now this expresses, very lively, the watchful Diligence of our great Adversary, to get us again into his Power, after Christ hath rescu'd us from him; and our own unaccountable Carelessness and Security, tho' in such hazardous Circumstances; together with the dreadful Consequences of it. St. Peter says, *Your Adversary the Devil, as a roaring Lyon, walketh about seeking whom he may devour*, 1 Pet. 5. 8. And our Lord tells us, *He was a Murtherer from the beginning*, John 8. 44. But he is enrag'd

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enrag'd more than ever against us, since our Blessed Redeemer hath snatch'd us as a Prey out of his Teeth ; and against those especially, who once were led Captive by him at his Will, but by a sincere Repentance have effectually regain'd their Liberty, and renounc'd him openly, and all his Works ; and by their exemplary Piety and good Advice, endeavour heartily the Ruine of his Kingdom, in others as well as themselves.

Those that have thus thoroughly escap'd his Clutches, and by the Grace of God are entirely deliver'd from him, and live in open Defiance of him ; these are the chief Objects of his Hatred and Spight ; and all his Hellish Wit and Cunning is set a work once more to get Possession of them. For he is the great *Deceiver*, as well as the *Destroyer*, and *As a Lyon greedy of his Prey, he lurketh in secret places ;* lays Traps and Ambushments that he may *surprize* those whom he can't conquer by open Force, and bare-fac'd Temptations ; using the same fly Arts that he did when he tempted our Blessed Saviour in the Wilderness. And since Spiritual Pride, and Presumption, and Security, will do his Work upon us as effectually as Lewdness and Debauchery ; when he can't effect it *this* way, he endeavours to do it *that*, and is too often successful.

But

But now, when *he* is so busy in contriving our Ruine, and we may be sure will let slip no Opportunity or Advantage we shall give him over us, but will improve it to the utmost; shall *we* be *unconcern'd* and careless, and think our selves safe, when we have so Cruel, so Crafty, so Potent, and Restless an Enemy to deal with: And take little or no Thought how we may best secure our selves from him? Especially when by so great a Miracle of Mercy we have been once already delivered out of his hands? Have we so little Sense of our past Misery, and our present Danger of being betray'd into it again; as not to look about us, and be upon our Watch and our Guard? Would a Man that knows his House is beset with Thieves, *Mat. 24. 43.* take no care of his Doors, but lay himself down to sleep, as securely as if all was safe and quiet? Let us therefore, as *St. Peter* adviseth, *be sober and vigilant*, and always in a readiness to resist, *being stedfast in the Faith*, *1 Pet. 5. 9.* For if we resist the unclean Spirit *He will fly from us*, *Jam. 4. 7.* and being like the *strong Man arm'd* (in the *11. Luke 21.*) prepared to defend our House with Courage, *our Goods will be at Peace*: But if when he steals upon us unawares, he finds our Armour laid aside, and all things in a negligent

negligent Posture, as if no Enemy was near; no wonder if he *overcomes us*, being so much *stronger than we*, and takes from us all our Armour wherein we trusted, so that we shan't be capable of making any more Resistance; and divides our spoil, in token of his intire Conquest over us.

And what Favour can be expected from an Enemy that is exasperated by being shamefully beaten out of what he was once Master of, and vigorously resisted and often repuls'd when he has endeavour'd to regain it; what Mercy can be hop'd for from such an enrag'd Enemy, whenever he shall get into Possession again?

Our Lord tells us, that *the last State of that Man will be worse than the first*, and we may well imagine it to be so; and therefore it highly concerns us, when by the powerful Grace of God we have been rescu'd from the sad Slavery of Sin, and redeem'd from our former evil Conversation, to fortifie our Souls with every Christian Vertue: That so we may be able to withstand the open *Assaults* of our Spiritual Adversaries, and likewise by a constant watchful Guard prevent our being surpriz'd by those whose Cunning is equal to their Force, and who always *lye in wait to deceive*.

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Now

Now upon what particular Accounts the last state of a Christian that has been once a Penitent, will be worse than the first, if he relapse again into a Course of Sin; it will be worth our while to enquire. And it will be worse, *First*, as that signifies *more wicked*; for the unclean Spirit in the Parable, when he return'd to the House whence he came out, *took with him seven other Spirits more wicked than himself*: *Secondly*, 'twill be worse as that signifies *more hopeless* and irrecoverable; for all those wicked Spirits, 'tis said, *enter in and dwell there*, take a fixed Possession, and make it their abode, and there is no mention made of their being cast out any more.

I. The Condition of those who having once recover'd from a Course of Sin fall into it again, is worse than it was at first, as that signifies *more wicked*. They become guilty both of more and greater Sins than ever; the ejected unclean Spirit at his return, brings with him *seven other Spirits*, and those *more vile* and unclean than himself.

That it is so in Fact, is but too evident from Experience; none being so profligately wicked as those, that after a Fit of Sickness, or some great Affliction, or surprising Accident, have taken up for a while, and liv'd like Christians, but at length

length have fallen again into a course of Sin. As if they heartily repented of their Repentance ; and endeavour'd to make some Attonement to the God of this World, for so long leaving his Service, by extraordinary Diligence in it for the time to come : *Giving themselves intirely over to lasciviousness, and to work all Unclean-ness with more greediness than ever, Eph.* 4. 19.

Now the true Cause of this sinful Relapse, is the Disease not being thoroughly cur'd and driven away ; but still lurking about (like the Unclean Spirit in the Parable) ready to return upon the first occasion. That is, 'twas not true Repentance that put the Man upon this short-liv'd Reformation, but something that scar'd him for the present, and made him bethink himself a little ; but when the Fright was over, he grew the same again. Had his Heart been really contrite, and broken with a deep Sense and pungent Remorse for his past Sins, and his Mind and Judgment relating to them quite chang'd from what it was, and the Bent and Inclination of his Soul, in earnest turn'd from Sin to God and Religion : This would have expell'd the Poyson effectually, and he would have become a new Creature, as 'twere born again, and renewed in the Spirit and

Temper of his Mind ; and have begun a lasting Course of Life upon new Principles of Action, and Ends and Motives directly contrary to those he had before. But when the Frame and Disposition of a Man's Soul continues as it was, though a Restraint may be put upon him for a time, and he may seem to himself and others to grow better ; yet the good Fit will not last long ; he'll soon begin to grow careless and *indifferent* to Religion, and then to be a *weary* of it ; and soon after to *hate* its dull Rules, and hanker after his former Pleasures and Enjoyments ; and then to throw its galling Yoke *quite off*, and make the best use he can of his recovered Liberty, that he may redeem the Time he has lost, and live apace for the future.

Relapses are generally more violent than the first Illness ; and till the Constitution and Habit is alter'd and rectified, the Diseases whether of Soul or Body, tho' their Course may be stop'd or diverted for a while, yet will return with greater Fury, and be more impetuous, than they were at first. And the Reason is, because there is no Change of Nature within ; *that* is just as it was, only curb'd and restrain'd by outward Force, which does but enrage and exasperate it ; and when the Restraint

is remov'd; 'tis a great deal worse than before.

But besides this, when the Soul relapseth into Sin, the great Enemy of Souls never fails to be ready to improve the Opportunity; and by great variety of Temptations and Allurements to heighten the Disease beyond a Cure, and quicken the poor Wretch on in the ways that lead to Destruction. And when the unhappy Creature does of himself run down Hill with great speed from Heaven, 'tis no hard matter for the unclean Spirit to hurry him on still faster; that he may have no Leisure to look back and consider, and find it impossible to stop, till he comes to the Fatal Precipice; and with infinite Terror, tho' then to no purpose, drops into Hell for ever. So that when evil Inclinations that have been sharpened by Restraint get loose, and meet with Temptation and Opportunity, and such a Prompter; no wonder if the Man grows wickedder than ever.

And 'tis owing in great Measure, to the Diligence and cunning Insinuations of the same cursed Tempter, that when those who have been bred up in Piety from their Youth, are seduc'd by ill Company, and Example to vicious Practices; they are often more *extravagantly* lewd than

others, and from young Saints, according to the Proverb, become old Devils, and are hardest of all to be reclaimed. For this is an extraordinary Prize to the Spirits of Darkness, and their Great Ruler will make use of all his Art and his Power to secure them, and prevent their Retreat; nothing shall be wanting to make them hardened in Wickedness, insensible *and past feeling* to any good *Impressions*, as if their *Consciences were fear'd with a hot Iron*, as the Apostle expresses it, *1 Tim. 4. 2.* For since good Education leaves a great and happy Prejudice in Favour of Religion, upon the Mind, and the Prepossessions of it are not easily worn out; the Devil knows it to be needful utterly to blot out every thing of that Nature if possible, and darken the *Understanding*, and lay *Conscience* asleep, as well as corrupt the *Will*, and engage the *Affections*; and by a continu'd *Run* of sensual Pleasures intirely *Alienate them from the Life of God*, Eph. 4. 18, 19. So that nothing but God's peculiar Protection can prevent their being the very worst of Men, (as indeed they usually are) and *that* they have forfeited, by deserting his Service, and joyning with the Spirits of Darkness against him.

And this is one Reason why new Converts to any Heresy, or such as Apostatize
from

from Christianity, are of all the most bitter and inveterate Enemies to the Truth. They have given the great Apostate so much Power over them (which he will not fail to make use of to the utmost) and provok'd God so justly to leave them to themselves and their Enemies Mercy ; that he makes intire Properties of them, and generally keeps them so for ever.

II. For Secondly, When once the Unclean Spirit is return'd, with *Seven other Spirits more wicked than himself*, 'tis very seldom but that he keeps his hold, and *dwells* there, as an absolute Lord and Master in his proper Home : And the miserable Wretches Condition is in all Humane Appearance *hopeless* and irrecoverable.

'Tis very rarely seen, if ever, that an *Apostate* has been recover'd to the Faith ; and Obstinacy and Heresy go hand in hand together ; and 'tis but too often that a Relapse into an habitual course of Vice, hath likewise prov'd incurable. I say, a Relapse into an *Habitual Course of Vice*, for as for falling into the *single* Commission of a Crime, that hath been formerly repented of ; 'tis, Blessed be God, very often otherwise. But as for those that have given themselves up to a Life of Wickedness and Debauchery, after they

have had a Pious Education, and led their first Years well, or as the Apostle expresses it, *Having begun in the Spirit, end in the Flesh*, Gal. 3. 3. This is a *Moral Practical Apostacy*; they deny God and their Saviour by their *Works*, being *abominable and disobedient, and to every good Work reprobate*; Tit. 1. 16. and the Consequence here, is usually as fatal as in the other Instances. In each of which, the Unhappy Creatures have expos'd themselves to the Devil's utmost Malice, and at the same time thrown themselves out of God's Protection, and forfeited his Grace and Assistance; and with strange Folly join with their worst Enemy in their own Destruction. How then can it be otherwise, but that the last State of such Men must be worse than the first, more profligately wicked and incurable! And if any one wants further Assurance of him, let him seriously weigh and consider the two following Places of Scripture; 2 Pet. 2. 20, &c. and Heb. 6. 4, &c. In the former of which, St. Peter speaking of those that had *forsaken the right way, and gone astray in vicious Practices, v. 15.* after they had made Profession of Christianity, tells us, that if, after Men have *escap'd the Pollutions of the World through the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they*
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are again entangled therein, and overcome ; the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of Righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the Holy Commandment delivered unto them. But it is hapned unto them according to the true Proverb, the Dog is turn'd to his own Vomit again, and the sow that was wash'd to her wallowing in the Mire. And St. Paul in the other Place, speaking of Apostacy from the Faith, hath these terrible Words, It is impossible for those who were once enlightned, and have tasted of the Heavenly Gift, and were made Partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good Word of God, and the Powers of the World to come ; if they shall fall away, to renew them again to Repentance : Seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. To which we may add what is said to the same purpose, Chap. 10. 26. For if we sin willfully after that we have received the Knowledge of the Truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins : But a certain fearful looking for of Judgment, and fiery Indignation, which shall devour the Adversaries. He that despised Moses's Law died without Mercy under two or three Witnesses : Of how much sorer Punishment, suppose ye, shall

shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the Blood of the Covenant wherewith he was sanctify'd an unholy thing, and hath done despite to the Spirit of Grace?

By all which, it appears to be a great and awakening Truth, that as much Happiness as Christianity is design'd to bring to Mankind, and will certainly bring, unless Men are their own hindrance; yet they may hinder it if they will, and make it turn to their infinitely greater Misery: And that the Condition of a Jew or Infidel will be better at present, and *more tolerable at the Day of Judgment*, than that of an irreclaimably wicked, or Apostatizing Christian; one that falls from the Faith or Practice of the Religion of the Holy Jesus.

Let him therefore that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he thus fall; and work out his Salvation with fear and trembling, with great Caution and watchful Circumspection, lest he be hardned thro' the Deceitfulness of sin, Heb. 3. 13. and made an irrecoverable Prey to the great Destroyer.

Our Blessed Lord hath already triumph'd over him, and so perfectly freed us from his Tyranny, that he can't do us the least Injury, unless we expose our selves to him,
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and as 'twere invite him to come again and take Possession of us. And then we do so, when we are careless and indifferent to Religion, neglect the Duties of it, and live a vain, idle, trifling Life, and seldom think a serious good Thought. When he finds our Souls thus *empty*, and even clean *swept* of any substantial Piety and Goodness, and without any other Furniture than wanton or worldly Fancies and Imaginations; and nothing like to oppose his Entrance, but all in a profound Security, and in this manner ready trim'd and garnish'd for him: How can we think he'll lose so fair an Opportunity, and how can we expect *God* should preserve us from him, when we take so little, or no Care to preserve our *selves*?

But let us consider, how dreadful our Condition will be, even much worse than ever, should he get us into his Power again; and how extreamly difficult, and next door to impossible our escape. Can we be so unnaturally cruel as to be necessary to our own Eternal Ruine; and wont we do that to secure our Souls, which we constantly do to secure our Bodies and our Goods.

When we are continually in so much Danger, but yet may be safe if we please (for tho' *our Enemies are mighty, and rage*
horribly,

horribly, yet God who dwelleth on high is mightier, and more are for us than against us) shall we be false and treacherous to our selves? Shall we set open the Gates to give the Infernal Powers a free Entrance, or at least, when we know what close Siege they lay, shall we keep no Guard, make no Provision for Defence? 'Tis true, *God is our Defence and our shield, and under the Protection of the most High we shall not miscarry*; but 'tis as true that he expects the Concurrence of our own best Endeavours, and then he will be our Refuge and our Fortress, and no secret Attempts by Night, no open Assaults by Day shall hurt us; *He will give his Angels charge over us to keep us in all our ways, and enable us to tread upon the Lyon and the Adder, and to trample the young Lyon and the Dragon under our Feet*, Psal. 91. But to expect his Protection when we are not only negligent and thoughtless of our own Safety, but of a Party with the Enemy, and do what in us lies by our Irreligion and Impiety to bring him in; this is strange Presumption, with which God must needs be highly displeas'd. And as good and gracious as he is, as desirous of our Happiness, and as ready to assist and deliver us in the time of need; yet if we are resolv'd to throw our selves away,

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we may : no irresistible Force, or miraculous Defence will be us'd to preserve us from it, but we shall be left to the sad Consequences of our most wretched, and unaccountable Choice.

And this we may be assur'd of (and 'twas our Lord's design in this Parable to make us sensible of it) that the more *intire* Conquest our great Champion hath made over the Spirits of Darkness, the more *perfect* Deliverance he hath given us from them, and the more ready he is to protect us from their Insults, and detect the Traps and Snares that they lay for us; the more inexcusable, and the more miserable shall we be, if by our own Default, our own supine Carelessness and Neglect, or incurable Wickedness, we betray our selves to him again.

So that this is the Conclusion of the whole Matter : God having done so much for us, thrown out the unclean Spirit by Baptism, and by the Grace of his Holy Spirit, since rescu'd us from his cruel Slavery, and restor'd us to the Liberty of the Sons of God ; and given us sufficient Aid to preserve our Freedom inviolate, if we'll make good use of it, and co operate with it ; nay, and taken Possession for *himself* too, by the In-dwellings of that his Divine Representative, whose merci-
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ful Design is to change our Souls from Dens of Thieves, Cages of unclean Birds, a Harbour for Devils, and vile Affections and Lusts, into Temples for the Blessed God, and make them Houses of Prayer, full of Devout and Holy Thoughts, and a Resemblance of Heaven upon Earth; so that now we must resist and drive out even the Holy Ghost himself, to make room for Satan and his Legions: God having done all this for us, expects on our part, that we should vigorously defend our selves against all Attempts that he shall make upon us, be watchful and circumspect, and fortify with more than ordinary Care, on that side where we are weakest, and most likely to yield to his Assaults. And then if instead of this, we are idle, and careless, and do nothing, but drowze away our time, and encourage the foul Fiend to come again; 'tis but just with God to abandon us for ever; and permit us, since we will needs have it so, to be as wicked and as miserable as Hell it self can make us.

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The P R A Y E R.

I.

BUT thou, O most Compassionate Saviour Jesus, God manifest in the Flesh to destroy the Works of the Devil ! Thou Divine Conqueror of the Powers of Darkness, before whose Presence they tremble, as their dreaded Judge ! Have pity on me, whom thou hast redeem'd from their Tyranny with thy most precious Blood ; and suffer me not any more to fall into their merciless Hands, but cover me with the shadow of thy Wings, that under thy defence I may be safe !

Thou knowest, O Lord, whereof I am made, and remembreſt that I am but Dust ; and thou thy ſelf haſt experienc'd how powerful and how ſubtle my ſpiritual Enemies are, ſo that of my ſelf it cannot be expected that I ſhould ſtand before them : O do thou therefore come to my Aſſiſtance, and never leave me nor forſake me for thy Mercies ſake ! Up Lord diſappoint them, and caſt them down ; make bare thy Almighty Arm, with which thou once didſt throw them down from Heaven like Lightning, and in all my Dangers and Temptations ſtand up to help me : Confine their Malice, confound their Devices,

Devices, and chain them up from doing any further Mischief to me !

II.

Thou Gracious Lord, (I bless thy Goodness) art always ready on thy part, to give me seasonable Succour and Relief ; O may I never be wanting to my self, but always vigilant and sober, and in a Posture of Defence ; that I may give my Enemy no advantage over me, but whenever he assaults me, beat him off with Shame and Disappointment !

O do thou uphold me with thy Powerful Grace, that I may never fall from my Stedfastness, nor repent of my Repentance, nor change thy gentle reasonable Service for the intolerable Slavery of the Infernal Tyrant ; nor be deceived by his Allurements, nor affrighted by his Terrors into a neglect of my bounden Duty to thee, and a Compliance with his cursed Will : But having begun well, go on with Constancy and Resolution in the good way that I have chosen, to the last ! So shall I likewise conquer by thy Might ; and giving thee intire Possession of my Soul, be secur'd against the unclean Spirits return : So shall I be full of Comfort and Joy, and Holy Hope in this World ;

World ; and when thou shalt please to call me hence, be guarded by thy Holy Angels in Safety to thy Blissful Presence ; and there for ever triumph with thee in thy Heavenly Kingdom. Which grant for thy Mercies sake, O most Compassionate, and Blessed Saviour Jesus ! Amen.

S PARA-

PARABLE VIII.

Of a Builder that was not able to finish, &c.

Luke xiv. 28, &c.

For which of you intending to build a Tower, sitteth not down first and counteth the Cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?

Least haply, after he hath laid the Foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him.

Saying, this Man began to build, and was not able to finish.

Or what King going to make War against another King, sitteth not down first and consulteth whether he be able with Ten Thousand, to meet him that cometh against him with Twenty Thousand?

Or else, while the other is a great way off, he sendeth an Ambassage, and desireth Conditions of Peace.

So likewise whosoever he be of you, that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my Disciple.

IN the 26th Verse of this Chapter, we find our Lord telling the great Multi-
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tudes that follow'd him upon account of the many Beneficial Miracles he wrought ;
If any Man come to me and hate not his Father and Mother, and Wife and Children, and Brethren and Sisters, yea and his own Life also, he cannot be my Disciple. That is, not absolutely hate them, (which is so barbarous and unnatural, and so impious too, that Christ could never mean it in that Sense) but as the parallel Place, *Mat. 10. 37.* teaches us to understand it, *He that loveth Father, or Mother, or Son, or Daughter, more than me, is not worthy of me :* And the same is to be understood of our Life too. And *v. 38.* *Whosoever doth not bear his Cross and come after me, cannot be my Disciple ;* or as St. Mark hath it, *Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross and follow me, Mark 8. 34.* That is, as 'tis in the Close of this Parable, *Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, or is not ready in Preparation of Mind to do so, whenever I shall call him to it, but will prefer any thing before me and my Service, whether it be his nearest Relations, his own Flesh and Blood, any thing that is most dear to him in this World ; and will not be content to bear the Cross too, to suffer Affliction and Persecution, and lose his very Life for my sake, Cannot be my Disciple.*

Now this, our Lord thought fit to tell the People, that in such vast Numbers crowded after him, not to discourage them from believing in him, and affright 'em from embracing his Doctrine, and giving themselves up to his Discipline, which he so earnestly invited all that heard him to submit to; but that they might not deceive themselves with expecting great *Worldly* Advantages from being his Followers (as they were very prone to do) and have a right Notion of the Nature and Design of the Religion he taught: Which was to wean Men from this perishing World, and fit and prepare 'em for Heaven; and likewise to warn 'em beforehand of the ill Treatment they would meet with here, and that purely for their being his Disciples, that so they might not be too much surpriz'd when it came, nor tempted to desert him by reason of it, but bear it with Patience and Constancy; and which, whosoever did not, should not be owned by him, nor esteem'd as *worthy of him*. He dealt thus plainly with them, that they might know what they had to trust to, if they became his Disciples, and what as such he expected from them; that so if they were resolv'd to follow him, they might do it sincerely and considerately, and with Souls ready arm'd against

gainst all Difficulties, and prepar'd for the worst that could come upon them for his sake. And to shew how needful it was for *him* to tell them the Truth in this Matter, and for *them* seriously to weigh and consider it; he spoke the Parables above recited: Namely, *Which of you intending to build a Tower, sitteth not down first and counteth the Cost, &c.* Or what King going to War against another King, sitteth not down first and consulteth, &c. And, as in these and all other Cases of like Nature, no Man can hope to proceed successfully, by rashly venturing upon any thing without previous mature Consideration; and a Man must revolve in his Mind, by what means he may best attain what he aims at, and think whether he is able to go thorough with this or that Design, before he meddles with it, if he would have it end prosperously and well, and not expose himself to Shame and Ruine: So in the great Concern of Religion, we must sit down and consult, and consider, and proceed warily and prudently, that we may be able effectually to do the Duties of it, (express'd here by *building a Tower*) and as effectually to resist all Temptations to the contrary (express'd by one King's meeting with *Ten Thousand*, another that comes against him with

Twenty.) And he that takes so wise a course as this, need not doubt of finishing his great Undertaking successfully.

Having thus shewn the true Meaning and Design of these Parables ; we shall in discoursing upon them, first sit down with the *Builder of the Tower*, and consider what will be needful to be done to compleat and finish the Spiritual Building of a Christian ; what it will stand us in to be true Disciples of the Holy Jesus, and a fit Habitation for himself and his Divine Spirit to dwell in : That so, counting the Cost before-hand, we may manage this great Affair with such Prudence and Caution, as that we may at length bring it to a happy Conclusion.

I. And *First*, Let us consider the *Nature of the Building*, and what kind of Structure it is that we are to raise : That is, Let us enquire what that is which Christ hath made the great *End* of his Disciples Actions, to which all their Endeavours must tend ; as a prudent Builder first lays his Design, and often reflects upon it, and then proceeds accordingly.

Now the *End* which our Holy Saviour requires us chiefly to propose and aim at, is Threefold. *First*, that in all things we may glorify our Great and Good Creator ; (2.) That we may live up to the Dignity of

of our Excellent Nature, and most Holy Profession ; (3.) That we may make our selves really and intirely happy. And to those that have read the Scripture, this is so evident, that it needs no particular Proof. And what can more become us than to have such Aims as these, and constantly to regulate all our Actions by them ? For as for the first of them, what can be more our Duty, and that bound upon us by all the *Reason* in the World, as well as the Commands of our Religion ; than in every thing we do to endeavour to advance *his Glory*, from whom we at first received our Being, and whose good Providence it is, that continually supports it, and preserves to us the free Use of all our Powers and Faculties ?

And as for our *Living up to the Dignity of our Excellent Nature*, this is what is bound upon us by the Law of our Creation, by which every Creature is oblig'd to live and act like it self ; only the *Irrational* Creatures do it by *Instinct*, as they are led and guided by their Maker, without reflecting upon their own Actions, and can't do otherwise : Whereas *Man*, having a Reasoning Power within him, whereby he knows what 'tis to live and act like a Man, and that he ought to do so, has withal a Liberty of *Choice* ; so

that he can do contrary to what he knows to be his Duty, if he pleases.

But now, this Liberty of ours, is no Excuse for our abusing it, and running Counter to our Reason, and degrading our selves in so vile a manner, but rather very much the contrary; and is a very cogent Argument to a constant Care and Circumspection, lest we be drawn into Brutish Practices when our Nature is so much above them, and make so ill a Use of that Freedom of Acting, which so eminently distinguishes us *from* the Beasts, as by it to sink our selves to a Level with them. And all the World must own, that nothing is more highly reasonable, and fitting to be done, than for a Rational Creature, and a free Agent to make use of his Reason, and his Liberty, in doing what is most suitable to the Dignity of his Nature; and in chusing those things before all others, which will add new degrees of Perfection to it.

As for our *Living worthy of our most Holy Profession*, as well as our Excellent Nature; nothing can be more reasonable than when a Man has given himself up to the Guidance of such a Master, whose Wisdom is unquestionable, and whose whole Endeavour is to promote his Good, and has ty'd himself by the most Sacred

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and Inviolable Obligations, to observe such a Discipline as is directly conducive to his greatest Interest : Nothing can be more reasonable than for him to act agreeably, and conform his whole Life to such Excellent Rules, and comply with all the Directions of so good a Guide.

And as for a Man's endeavouring by all due means, *to make himself really and entirely happy* ; to this, every one finds a very great and uncontrollable Desire. Every Man would be happy if he could, and 'tis his Creator's Design that he should be so ; and tho' we are often fatally mistaken as to what *is* our Happiness, and about the *means* to attain it, (and which Mistakes Religion only can thoroughly rectify) yet Happiness in general, is what we all do naturally and earnestly press after, and endeavour to attain.

So that we see, that which the Christian Religion doth direct us to as our *End*, is most worthy of us ; highly agreeable to our Reason, and such as must be approv'd of, even by those that act contrary to it. And tho' the last Branches of it but now mention'd, be subordinate to the first ; yet there is such a perfect Harmony between them, that he that aims at *one*, must in effect aim at the other likewise (as whoever would be truly *happy*, must live like

a *Man* and a *Christian*; and *that* is the best Course he can take to *glorify God*) and the very same Endeavours are proper to attain them all.

Thus Noble and Compact is that Building, which our Lord requires his Followers to raise; thus exact the Symmetry of its Parts, and so inseparably link'd together, that he who builds in this manner, will indeed erect a most Glorious Structure that will last for ever.

II. But then Secondly, it must be seriously consider'd, by what *means* we may be best able to compleat so great a Work; lest having with much Cost and Labour *laid the Foundation*, and are not able to *finish it*, all that behold it begin to mock us, saying, *these Men began to build but were not able to finish*. That is, lest having begun well in the great Affair of Religion, and propos'd to our selves the right end of the Actions of a Man and a Christian, and made some Advances towards it; we should be at a stand, and able to proceed no further: And thereby become the Scorn and Triumph of the great Enemy of Souls, and of profligate wicked Men; who are never better pleas'd, than when they see hopeful Beginnings in Piety come to nothing; and make great use of such Instances to discourage Men from

from attempting, what so few are able to go through with.

To prevent this therefore, which is of such ill Consequence to Religion in general, as well as to those that are particularly concern'd ; *We should sit down, and count the Cost*, seriously enquire which way we shall best be able to go on successfully with this Spiritual Building, and compute at what Expence it may be finish'd. That is, we must endeavour to inform our selves of the most effectual *means* in order to the great End before-mention'd, and in the due use of them vigorously and constantly pursue it ; and then no fear of Success.

Now our Lord having told us in the *Introduction* to these Parables we are discoursing of, v. 26, 27. — 33. and in the *Close* of them, as likewise in several other Places, that *Self-denial* and *Contempt of the World*, Mat. 10. 37. and a patient *bearing the Cross*, Mark 8. 34. or undergoing with Courage and Constancy whatever Troubles and Afflictions, or other Discouragements we shall meet with for his sake ; that *this* is absolutely necessary to our being his true Disciples : We shall consider these Particulars, as the most effectual *means* for our great End ; the best way we *can* take, and which of necessity

cessity we *must* take, to build up our selves as a *Holy Temple* for the Spirit of God to inhabit, and carry on the great Work to Perfection.

I. And first, *Self-denial* is a necessary means in order to this great End, and without which no Man can truly glorify his Creator, nor live up to the Dignity of his own Nature, and Holy Profession, nor consequently ever be truly and intirely happy.

Now, by *Self-denial*, is meant, first, the curbing and restraining the irregular and inordinate *Appetites* and *Affections* of our corrupt sinful Nature, and bringing them into Subjection to the wise and good Government of right Reason and Religion; and by no means suffering the Interests of the Soul to be disregarded for the sake of any sensual Enjoyments:

And (2.) 'tis likewise intirely to subjugate our *Wills* to the Will of God, and make all our Choices in conformity to his good Pleasure; and when at any time he chuses for us, and disposes of us into such and such Circumstances, and Condition of Life, how averse soever our Inclinations may be to it, to say with our Blessed Lord, and with the same Sincerity and intire Resignation, *Nevertheless, not my Will but thine be done*;

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Nor is this all, for (3.) we must submit our *Understandings* too, without the least reserve, to whatever Truths God hath been pleas'd to reveal to Mankind, how repugnant soever they may seem to our own Reason, or to our present Interest (by which our Reason is often corrupted and bias'd the wrong way ;) and when the Revelation appears plainly to be *his*, and 'tis evident that thus and thus *he* hath said, immediately to bring down every high Thought to it : Admiring and adoring his infinite and incomprehensible Wisdom, and reflecting with great Humility upon our own Blindness and Ignorance, and earnestly beseeching him more and more to enlighten our Minds, and lead us by his Blessed Spirit into all useful Truth.

So that to *deny our selves*, for the sake of our great Master, and that we may follow him as his true Disciples ; is to new mould and frame our Souls throughout, to a Temper and Disposition like to *his*, when he was pleased to take upon him our Nature, and converse amongst us. 'Tis to think, and chuse, to shun and desire as he did ; to have the same Aims and Designs as he had, and to prosecute them by the same Means, so far as our Frailty and Imperfection will allow. For he is our Divine Head, and we are his Members ;

Members ; and therefore as we are influ-
 enc'd by the same Spirit, we should mind
 the same things, and conform our selves
 in all respects to him, as our Leader and
 Guide, and study to be as like him as we
 can. And because in this our State of
 Degeneracy, our Propensions and Inclina-
 tions, and Appetites, press so violently
 after the Gratifications of *Sense*, and the
 things of the *World* ; and our Notions of
 Good and Evil, of Truth and Falshood,
 are so mightily vitiated ; and we are so
 extreamly fond of our *lower selves*, our
 Bodies, as to make *them* the great Object
 of our Love, and lay out our chief En-
 deavours to please and humour *them* :
 Therefore that Wiser and Nobler Course
 above-mentioned, is call'd *self-denial* ;
 and indeed it is so, according to the
 common Notion of *self*, which makes
 the *Bruit*, the *Man*. But alas ! *How are*
the mighty fallen ! What Shame, what
 Contempt, what Misery, what Ruine,
 hath *sin* brought upon our Excellent Na-
 ture ! And what pains must we take to
 become tolerably like *our selves* as God
 first made us ! And how infinitely are we
 indebted to our Gracious Lord, who was
 pleas'd to condescend so very low, as to
 take our Nature upon him, that he might
 by his Example, his Doctrine, and his
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Sufferings effect our Recovery ; and raise us even to greater Honour and Excellency than that from which we fell !

But be the pains never so great, they will be well bestow'd in such a Work as this : And tho' we ought not to flatter our selves that less will accomplish it than really will, for that will make us idle and negligent, and proceed at such a cold indifferent rate as will render us like the inconsiderate Builder here in the Parable, never able to finish, and turn to our Eternal Reproach ; yet when we have counted the *utmost Cost*, the Glorious Success that will attend it, will make ample amends for all.

For, this *self-denial*, as uncomfortable as it may seem at first, is really *self-love* : 'Tis the direct Pursuit of our great and best Interest ; 'tis the way to perfect our Natures, and advance our selves to the highest pitch of Happiness that we are capable of enjoying. 'Twill fill our Souls with perfect Serenity and Satisfaction *here* ; and when we have shaken off this troublesome Load of Flesh which *presseth down the Soul*, and as 'twere chains it to this Earth, 'twill fix us in an Orb of Glory in the highest Heavens, where we shall shine for ever ; and joyn with all the bright Intelligences there, in the true *Mu-*
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sick of the Spheres : Singing the Praises of the Eternal Fountain of Light, and Love, and Bliss ; and together with the *Morning Stars, and all the Sons of God, shouting triumphantly aloud for Joy, Job 38. 7.*

II. As for *Contempt of the World*, which is another requisite to make us true Disciples of Jesus, 'twill naturally follow upon this *self-denial* ; and he that hath thus gotten the Victory over *himself*, will easily overcome the *World* too, and be dead to all its little Enjoyments, and ready to part with all, when his Duty to his great Master requires it.

When the Soul is become truly *Christian*, and hath such Noble Aims and Designs, as our Lord hath taught us to propose to our selves, and hath conquer'd the main Hindrances in her Pursuit of them, which spring from vicious Self-love ; this will make the happy Man fit so loose to every thing here below, that he will value the dearest things here, as nothing in comparison with the Favour of God, and the Hopes of Eternal Life ; and forsake them as readily when inconsistent with that his great *End*, as a poor Mechanick would do the Tools of his Trade, and his little dirty Shop, for a stately Palace, and a great Estate. For how can *he* but contemn the *World*, who lives in continual View
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of Heaven ! And daily converseth with God, and his Saviour, by Meditation and Prayer, and Holy Breathings, like that of the Royal Psalmist, *As the Hart panteth after the Water-brooks, so panteth my Soul after thee O God. My Soul is athirst for God, even the living God, O when shall I come to appear before the Blissful Presence of my God !* Psal. 42. 1, 2. The Life that such a one lives, *He lives by the Faith of the Son of God, who lov'd him, and gave himself for him.* He lives by Faith more than by Sense, even by the Faith of his Blessed Redeemer, who hath brought Life and Immortality to light by his Gospel ; and his Thoughts are fix'd upon those Immense Treasures of Glory and Happiness above, which Jesus hath purchased for him.

And he that has thus learn'd *Self-denial*, and *Contempt of the World*, is in a fair way to the

III. Third thing requir'd to his carrying on his Spiritual Building to Perfection, the *taking up his Cross*, rather than desert his Saviour, and even losing his Life for his sake.

This indeed is the great Tryal of all, and when 'twill cost so much to be our Lord's faithful Disciple ; 'twill be a mighty Temptation to do as those did in the

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Gospel,

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Gospel, *who went back and walk'd no more*
with him, John 6. 66.

For Flesh and Blood naturally shrinks back, and flies from Pain, and Trouble, and Affliction, and most of all from Death, that King of Terrors ; especially when led on by Persecution, and attended with Shame and Reproach, and all the Torments that cruel Men can invent. This is terrible indeed ; and it requires great Consideration in our selves, and extraordinary Assistances of the Spirit of God to enable a Man to bear up under such disheartning Tryals as these, and with Courage and Constancy to hold out, and endure to the end.

But this we may depend upon, that if we do *our* part, God will not fail of doing *his* ; if we prepare our selves beforehand for such sad Times by proper Considerations, and put on the Armour of Righteousness on the Right Hand and on the Left ; we need not doubt, but when God shall think fit to call us actually to the Combat, he will carry us through, and bring us off with Triumph.

Let us therefore with the King in the other Parable, that was going to war against another King, sit down first, and consult, whether we be able with ten Thousand to meet him that cometh against us with twenty Thousand ;

Thousand ; even the Prince of the Powers of the Air, whose Strength and Cunning vastly exceeds ours, and who must needs prevail over us, if consider'd nakedly, and without respect to some Foreign Aid.

But what then ? Must we, while this our potent Enemy *is yet a great way off, send an Ambassage, and desire Conditions of Peace* ? Must we yield to his greater Power, and give our selves up as a Prey into his Teeth ? This would be vile Cowardice indeed, in those that fight under the Banner of the Victorious Jesus, who has so often triumph'd over that Infernal Tyrant, and rescu'd us so gloriously from him once already. No, we must declare open War against him all our days, and against all his Confederates and Allies ; and not in the least hearken to any of his Proposals of Peace and Amity : For he is the great Deceiver, who aims at nothing but our Ruine ; and therefore, no Truce, no Cessation of Arms, nor so much as *parleè* in this Religious War. But in the Strength of our great Leader Jesus, and *in the Power of his Might*, we must march on boldly against him, and defy this great Rebel to the Lord of Hosts. Saying as *David* did to *Goliath*, that monstrous Champion of the Philistines, when he went to engage him, *Thou comest to me with a Sword,*

and with a Spear, and with a Shield, with all the dreadful Weapons of Destruction, with Legions of Temptations and Snares, and a mighty Force to crush me into Ruine ; But I come to thee in the Name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the Armies of Israel, 1 Sam. 17. 45. who once threw thee down from Heaven like Lightning, and compleated his Conquest over thee upon the Cross, and by his Aid I shall not fail of Victory.

Such a Faith as this, as it will overcome the World, so will it overcome the God of it too ; and all the Principalities and Powers, and the Rulers of the Darkness of it that are employ'd against us. But then we must be constantly upon our Watch and our Guard, and put on the whole Armour of God, that we may be able to stand in the evil Day, and having overcome all to stand, Eph. 6. 11, &c.

Stand therefore, having your Loins girt about with Truth, and Sincerity ; which will make you resist your great Enemy in earnest, with Life and Spirit, as those that have indeed a Desire to conquer. And have on the Breast-plate of Righteousness, a Conscience void of offence both towards God and Man : for nothing makes a Man so brave as Innocence, and Virtue, and nothing so faint-hearted and timorous as Guilt ;

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Guilt; as Solomon long ago could observe, Prov. 28. 1. *The wicked flee when no Man pursueth, but the righteous are bold as a Lyon.* And let your Feet be shod with the Preparation of the Gospel of Peace, be prepar'd with Patience to go through all Hardships in your Spiritual Conflict, to tread boldly and confidently in the most rough and thorny ways, and to break through the Traps of what kind soever, that shall be laid to ensnare you; and fight the good Fight not with Rage and Fury, but with Calmness of Mind, and a sedate Resolution, which is the truest Courage, and best becomes the quiet, peaceful Temper of the Gospel; and is most agreeable to the Example that our great General hath set us, who conquer'd Hell and Death, tho' with undaunted Bravery, yet not with the Fierceness and Roar of a Lyon, but the Meekness and Stillness of a Lamb.

Above all, taking the Shield of Faith, in the Promises of God and our Saviour, and the certainty of Eternal Rewards and Punishments in another World, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery Darts of the wicked one. For what can be of Force sufficient to affright a Man from the ways of sincere Religion, and Duty to the Blessed Jesus, who attends to the exceeding great Reward he hath promis'd to crown

it with in the Kingdom of Light and Glory? And what can prevail with any one to walk in the ways of Sin, that considers whither they tend, even to outer Darkness and Despair in Hell, where shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of Teeth for ever? *And take the Helmet of Salvation*: That is, repose your Confidence in the meritorious Efficacy of your Redeemer's Sufferings, who has overcome the Powers of Darkness, and will secure all those from falling into the Hands of the Destroyer, who fight courageously and put their Trust in his Help. This Hope will cover your Heads in the Day of Battle, and inspirit you with true Christian Fortitude, and make you able to maintain your Ground: But then, you must likewise *take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God*, be diligent in the Study of the Holy Scriptures, whereby ye shall grow wise to Salvation, and be able to detect the Hellish Stratagems of your Infernal Enemy; and be ready to repel his more open Assaults, as our Divine Champion did in the Wilderness, with "*Thus*
 "*and thus it is written, Thou shalt love the*
 "*Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou*
 "*serve, Mat. 4: 10. The Wages of Sin is*
 "*Death, but the Gift of God is Eternal*
 "*Life, through Jesus Christ our Lord,*
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“ Rom. 9. 23. *For what shall it profit a*
 “ *Man to gain the whole World and lose*
 “ *his own Soul, and what shall a Man give*
 “ *in exchange for his Soul ?* Mark 8. 36.
 “ *Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting*
 “ *Fire, prepared for the Devil and his*
 “ *Angels,* Mat. 25. 41. Such home Thrusts
 as these will make the Fiend fly from you
 with Terror and Shame, and Disappoint-
 ment ; and render you *more than Conque-*
rouers through Christ that strengthneth you :
 and whose Aid you must always call for
 by fervent Prayer, *and watch thereunto with*
all Perseverance : (which was our Lord’s
 Advice to his Apostles, in the Garden of
 his Agony, *Watch and pray that ye enter*
not into Temptation, Mat. 26. 41.) for of
 your selves ye can do nothing, and all your
 sufficiency is of God.

This is that whole Armour of God
 which will render us invulnerable in our
 Spiritual Warfare ; and this will be our
 Support too in all other Troubles and
 Afflictions that are of God’s sending, and
 we do not foolishly and wickedly bring
 upon our selves. And then, we may count
 it all Joy, *that we have fallen into divers*
Temptations, Jam. 1. 2. *when the Tryal of*
our Faith hath wrought Patience, and Pa-
tience Experience, and Experience Hope, that
maketh not asham’d, Rom. 5. 3, 45.

And should we lose our *Lives* for our dear Lord, rather than prove false and rebellious to him ; that Death would be our Gain : And *Eternal Life*, in Joy unspeakable and full of Glory, Mat. 10. 39. shall compensate the Loss of that which scarce deserves the Name of Life, it is so short, so uncertain, and so full of Trouble,

Tho' we must expect therefore to be exercis'd with Temptations, with Troubles and Afflictions in the Faithful Service of our Lord, (and the more we expect them the better able shall we be to behave our selves well under them when they come) and tho' sometimes 'twill be necessary for us to resist even unto Blood ; yet let us not be dismay'd, for if God be for us, who can be against us ? And he that with a true Christian Courage and Resolution maintains his Post, and looks up to Jesus for Help, shall either be supported under all his Tryals, and carry'd safely through them ; or else, as his Lord did, he shall conquer by dying, and be made perfect by those very Sufferings, which seem'd to crush him to pieces. Therefore, says our Lord, *Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer, but be thou faithful unto Death, and I will give thee a Crown of Life*, Rev. 2. 10. And in the 5. Matt. 10, &c. *Blessed are they which are persecuted for Righteousness*

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teousness sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are ye, when Men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of Evil against you falsely for my sake; Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your Reward in Heaven.

This Doctrine of rejoicing under Sufferings, I know is look'd upon by the World as unpracticable Nonsense, and is one of the Atheistick Objections against our Holy Religion; and were we all *Bodily*, and our Duration confin'd to *this* World, and did our chief Happiness arise from the Gratifications of Sense, there would be something in it: And to preach Patience and Silence to a Swine under the Knife, would not be more ridiculous than to talk to such a *sensitive* Man as this, of Resignation and Acquiescence, much less of Joy, under what is painful and afflictive to his Sense.

But if we have Reason, and a Soul that is Immortal, and expect a future endless State in a Spiritual World, in which we shall be for ever happy or miserable, according to our Behaviour here, and the Temper and Disposition of our Souls in this first Life; Then whatever tends to that our chief Happiness, * and will prevent Eternal Mi-

* *Hoc incolumi; non tantum siccos Oculos tuos esse, sed etiam Lætos Oportet. Sen.*

fery,

fery, however sharp and pungent it may be to Flesh and Blood, ought to be born, not with Patience and Resignation only, but with Chearfulness and Joy.

Calamitates in Remedium Cessere ; Et Levioribus Incommodis Graviora sanata sunt. Seneca.

And nothing does more sensibly demonstrate the Excellency of our Holy Religion, nor do more Honour to the Divine Author of it, than for those that profess it, thus nobly to bear up under the Pressures of Affliction. It shews there is something very extraordinary in it, that raises the Soul thus above the World ; and fills the Heart and Mouth with Praise, and Adoration, and Love, of that very Being who takes from us our present Comforts. It shews what glorious Expectations they have, who account their Sufferings here, how great soever, as *light* and *nothing*, when in the Ballance with that *exceeding weight of Glory*, that *massy* substantial Fe-

Nihil æquè Magnam apud nos Admirationem Occupat, quàm Homo fortiter Miser. Seneca.

licity reserved in Heaven for them. And as in the Primitive Times nothing did more recommend the Christian Religion to the World as truly Divine, than the Constancy, and Patience, and Heroick Bravery of those that suffer'd for it ; so now, the same Patience, tho' exercis'd

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cis'd by other Tryals, must needs be a convincing Argument that 'tis a *Heavenly Institution*, which teaches such true Greatness of Mind as this.

No wonder therefore if *St. Paul gloried in Tribulations*, *Rom. 5. 3.* *2 Cor. 11. & 12. Chap.* which tended so much to his own Eternal Happiness, and the Glory of his great and good Creator, and most merciful Redeemer; and all good Christians have reason to do so too, upon the same accounts; *1 Pet. 3. 14. — 4. 16.*

Having thus seen what is the Design or *Model* we are to propose to our selves in our Spiritual Building, and always to have in our Eye as we proceed; namely, *God's Honour and Glory, the perfecting our own Nature*, and doing nothing but what is becoming the Dignity of it, and the Excellency of our *Holy Profession*, and what may conduce to our *Eternal Happiness*: And having counted the *Cost* of this Building, and seen what Charge and Pains we must be at if we would bring it to Perfection; namely, that we must *deny our selves* and *contemn the World*, and be ready to *forsake all Earthly Comforts* to follow our great Master in the ways of Christian Vertue, and to bear with Patience whatever Troubles and Discouragements shall be laid in our way, and with
unshaken

unshaken Resolution to resist to the utmost, whatever Temptations we may meet with to leave the great Work unfinish'd, and even to *lose our very Lives* for his sake, when he shall please to call us to that Tryal of our Faith; I shall now draw a few Inferences from what hath been discours'd, and so conclude.

And first, from hence we may learn how needful frequent and serious *Consideration* is, to carry on this most important Business of Salvation with Success. Indeed no Business can succeed well without it, unless by some strange unusual Chance; much less can we expect *that* of Salvation should, which hath so many Difficulties attending it: And tho' a Man may happen to become rich by some lucky unthought of Hit, and prosper in some Affairs of the World he knows not how; yet no Man ever did or shall arrive at *Heaven by chance*, and save his Soul before he thinks of it, or has done any thing in order to it in the way that Christ hath directed.

For it is not so easy a matter to be a true Christian, as many of us are apt to believe; and to be *renew'd in the Spirit of our Minds*, quite chang'd and alter'd in the Temper and Disposition of our Souls, according to the Holy Rules of the Gospel, and

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and made *new Creatures* ; to be *converted*, and become as little *Children*, in Contentment and Humility, in Meekness, and a Readiness to Reconciliation and Forgiveness, in a Freedom from Guile and Hypocrisy, and hurtful Dissimulation, and the like, without which our Lord hath expressly told us, we shall not *enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*, Mat. 18. 3. Finally, to tread in the steps of our Blessed Saviour in the Practice of both the Active and Passive Virtues of his Holy Religion, and in all respects to live as becomes the Gospel of Christ : This is not so easily done as we may be apt to imagine ; and much Thought, and Care, and Circumspection, Watchfulness and Contrivance, and great Industry and Diligence is necessary in such a Work as this.

We should therefore frequently sit down, and with that Seriousness which a Matter of such infinite Consequence requires, consider with our selves what a mighty Work we have upon our hands, and how we may most effectually apply our selves to it, and not spend our short uncertain Life, in that thoughtless, trifling unaccountable manner, as is but too much the way of the World. We should often look to our great *End*, and bethink our selves what are the best *Means* to attain it ; and
not

not live so perfectly at random as too many do, making their own Fancy and Humour the sole Rule of their Actions, and studying nothing but how to gratify their sensual Appetites, living in Idleness, Luxury, and Riot, as if they had no higher Principle in them than the Beasts that perish.

But can any Man that has the Light of Reason only to direct him, think that he was born for such a Life as this? * Much less can any Christian that has read the Scriptures, be so besotted as to expect to save his Soul at this rate? Why are we exhorted to *strive to enter in at the strait Gate*, and told that *many shall seek to enter in*, in a careless, indifferent manner, and *shall not be able*? Luke 13. 24. Why does the Apostle advise us to *work out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling*? Phil. 2. 12. Why this, and a great deal more of the same Nature every where to be met with in the Holy Writings, if 'twere not a matter of Difficulty, and such as requir'd our best endeavours to accomplish? And

* *Est aliquid quo tendis, Et in quod dirigit Arcum?
An passim sequeris Corvos, testaq; luteq;
Securus: qui pes ferat, atq; ex Tempore Vivis?
Discetq; O miseri, Et causas Cognoscite Rerum,
Quid sumus, aut quidnam victuri Gignimur—*

Perf. 3. Sat.

if so, why is it so strangely neglected; why every thing prefer'd before it? Why do we defer from time to time, the setting about this great, this necessary, this difficult work, and create to our selves other vain Employments on purpose to put this by; or if we are perswaded at any time to enter upon it, break it off again, almost as soon as begun?

Sine Proposito vagantur quærentes negotia, nec quæ Destinaverunt agunt, sed in quæ Incurrunt. Seneca.

All this, proceeds in a great measure, from want of Thought, and serious Consideration; and therefore he that thinks it worth his while to be *sav'd*, must think it worth his while to *consider*; and make use of all his Reason, his Prudence, and his Foresight, in contriving how he may best *finish* that great Work, which if not finish'd, 'twould have been infinitely better for him if he never had been born.

II. And this puts me in mind of another thing I would infer from the former of these Parables we have been considering, namely, the Necessity of *Perseverance* in our pious Endeavours; and as the Apostle expresses it, of *Perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God*, 2 Cor. 7. 1. For what will laying the Foundation of a Building signify, tho' with never so much Exactness, if we then leave off, and take no care to finish

finish it ? And should we go on to raise the Superstructure ; the higher we go, the more Expence and Labour will be lost, if we don't go thorough with it, and by giving the finishing Stroke to it, make it fit for use. Without this, the Builder does but expose himself to Peoples Talk and Censure, and his Building will soon come to nothing. And so it is in Religion : The continuing *stedfast in it to the End*, Heb. 3. 14. is that which will intitle us to the Immense Rewards of it. Thus our Lord, Mark 13. 15. *He that endureth to the end the same shall be sav'd ; But if any Man draw back, says St. Paul to the Hebrews, my Soul shall have no pleasure in him, Heb. 10. 38.* And therefore we are so often exhorted to *hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering, to be stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord*, and the like, 1 Cor. 15. ult. that so our *Labour may not be in vain*, and in due time we may *Reap if we faint not*. And upon this account it is that St. James says, *Faith without Works is dead, and unprofitable, being alone ; 'tis as uselefs as a Foundation without a Building rais'd upon it : And accordingly St. Jude advises us to build up our selves in our most holy Faith, Jude 20.* not to content our selves with having laid a good Ground-work, but to compleat

compleat the beauteous Pile of Christian Vertue, and labour continually to bring it to Perfection. And whoever reflects how averse to true Piety our corrupted Nature is, and how rapidly the Stream of our Affections runs against it ; and how diligent our great Enemy is to quicken our Motion the wrong way : Will find it as necessary for a Christian to be always proceeding onward, and making every day some further Progress in Religion ; as for a Man to ply his Oars vigorously, and without intermission, that rows in a strong Current againd Wind and Tide.

III. In the last Place ; if, as the latter of these Parables represents it, 'tis the Wisdom of a weak Prince, not rashly to wage War with one of double Force, but as soon as he can to make Peace : What a Madness is it for a poor weak Creature to rebel against his Almighty Creator ! What but utter Ruine can be expected from such an unequal Conflict !

For let me demand, as God once did of Job, *Hast thou an Arm like God, or canst thou thunder with a Voice like him ? Deck thy self now with Majesty and Excellency, and array thy self with Glory and Beauty. Cast abroad the Rage of thy Wrath, and behold every one that is proud, and abase him. Then will I also confess unto thee, that thy*

own right hand can save thee, Job 40. 9, &c. What stinging Upbraidings are these, and how to the Life do they express the Impotency of a poor despicable sinful Mortal, when contending with his Maker! How do they force from us *Job's* Confession and Self-Abasement; *Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my Mouth, Job 40. 4.* Because *I have added Rebellion to my Sin, and clapp'd my hands, and multiply'd my words against God, Job 34. ult.* Can we think that God will always tamely put up the Indignities we offer him, and that our Rebellion and Disobedience shall always go unpunish'd? Will he never think we vindicate his Honour, and shew a Difference between the righteous and the wicked? Are all his terrible Threatnings meer Noise, and those dreadful Descriptions he has given us of the Process at the great Day of Judgment, wherein he will require of us an Account of our Works, and judge us according to them, and of the Wrath to come against those that have been Workers of Iniquity, when the most exquisite Torments both of Soul and Body, shall be their sad Portion for ever, without the least Allay or Mitigation? Is all this nothing but Poetical Fiction, or high words that will never be made good? For
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God's sake let us not sooth our selves up with such ridiculous Fancies as these : But be perswaded, if not by Love and Gratitude, yet by the Terrors of the Divine Vengeance, against which none shall be able to stand, *immediately*, before that terrible Day shall come (for then 'twill be too late) to send an humble *Ambassage*, and *desire Conditions of Peace*. To beg Mercy and Compassion through Jesus the great Mediator between him and us ; whose Merits are all-sufficient, and Intercession most prevalent for all that with true Faith, and unfeigned Repentance come to God by him. That for his sake who is the Eternal Son of his Love, in whom he is well pleased ; he would look upon us with Pity and Compassion !

The P R A Y E R.

I.

MOST Blessed, and Holy God ! who graciously desirest the Happiness of all thy Creatures, and in infinite Mercy hast sent Jesus the Son of thy Love, to rescue sinful Mankind from the Depths of Misery, and prepare them for the Enjoyment of thy self in Glory : All Love and Praise be to thee, and may thy inexpressible Goodness be magnify'd for ever !

How Holy, Just, and Good; how noble, how lovely, and how excellent above all other, is the Religion which Jesus hath vouchsaf'd to teach us; and that Duty and Service which he requireth of us! How directly do his Divine Precepts tend to perfect our Nature, and make us fit for Heaven! But since, Alas! it is so hard for us in this our degenerate State, to do the Good that we desire and ought to do, and we find ourselves too ready to comply with Temptations to Evil: O grant that we may be so wise as seriously to lay to Heart the hazardous Condition we are in, and employ all the Reason thou hast given us to discover the Snares of the great Deceiver, and take those Measures which are most conducive to our Happiness! And do thou keep us by thy Divine Protection from all things hurtful, and by the Guidance of thy good Spirit lead us to all things profitable to our Salvation.

II.

What mighty Encouragement, hast thou given us, Blessed Redeemer, to be steadfast, unmoveable, and always abounding in the Works of Holiness; by promising such Glorious Rewards to those that do so, as Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither can enter into the Heart of Man to conceive! We earnestly beseech thee, therefore, merciful Lord,

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Lord, to give us Grace so duly to attend to the Transcendent Excellency of those thy precious and invaluable Promises, that we may persist in thy Service against all Opposition whatsoever: And bear up with Courage and Patience, under all Difficulties and Discouragements, and with Contempt and Scorn reject all Temptations, how alluring soever to the contrary; as not worthy to be compared with our glorious Reversion above.

And since, into thy Presence and thy Kingdom no unclean thing can enter, do thou enable us by thy Heavenly Aid, to cleanse and purify our Souls from all those Defilements which are abominable to thee; that we may no longer resist thy Heavenly Will, but submit our selves intirely to thy Obedience. That so at length, after a persevering Piety and Holy Preparation here, we may be admitted into those Regions of Purity and Love, of Happiness and Glory; where thou, most Blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, livest and reignest for ever. Amen, Amen.

PARABLE IX.

Of the Lost Sheep.

Luke xv. 4.

What Man of you having an Hundred Sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the Ninety and Nine in the Wilderness, and go after that which is lost until he find it?

And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his Shoulders rejoicing.

And when he cometh Home, he calleth together his Friends and Neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoyce with me, for I have found my Sheep which was lost.

I say unto you, that likewise Joy shall be in Heaven over one Sinner that repenteth, more than over Ninety and Nine just Persons which need no Repentance.

THE Design of this Parable being the same with that of the *Prodigal Son*, Ver. 11. of this Chapter : Namely, to shew how desirous our good God is of the Recovery of a Sinner from a Course of Wickedness to a Sense of his Duty, and

and how pleas'd he is when he hath effected it ; I once intended to pass it by, having formerly discours'd upon that other Parable, *Vol. I. p. 365.* But upon second Thoughts, having duly weigh'd and consider'd it, I found enough in it of peculiar *Sense*, as well as Variety of Expression, to deserve our serious and particular Reflections upon it.

And because both in the New Testament and the Old, we frequently find God's faithful People call'd his *Sheep*, and those that wander from the Paths of their Duty to him, compar'd to *stray* or *lost Sheep* ; we will *first* consider the Reason of this way of Expression, and improve it as we go to our Practice ; and then conclude with some Remarks upon the good Shepherd's so diligently *seeking* his Lost Sheep, and great Care to bring it back again safe to his Flock ; which is an Argument of greater Tenderness than only to receive it kindly when it should return of its self, (as the Father did his Prodigal Son.) Therefore, of the two, *this* Parable exalts the Divine Compassion to a Sinner to the greater Height : And gives us a clearer Notion of his infinite Mercy. And as for the Joy that was occasioned by the lost Sheep's being *found* ; that being the same with what is said upon the return of the

Prodigal, we shall need say the less upon that Particular now, having considered it before upon that Parable.

I. Let us begin then with enquiring upon what Accounts God's Faithful People, or Men under the Discipline of the true Religion, especially the *Christian*, are so often call'd *Sheep* in the Holy Writings?

1. And it may be, in the *first* Place, because a *Sheep* is a Creature remarkable for its being perfectly *harmless* and *innocent*, and free from all hurtful Qualities and Dispositions. And *such*, is every one oblig'd to be, that is under the Discipline of the Religion of Christ Jesus; and *such will* every one be that sincerely and intirely gives himself up to that Holy Discipline. For what more strictly forbidden in the New Testament especially, than the offering any Harms or Injuries to any Man, even to an Enemy, or so much as the returning those that are done to us; unless it be in the necessary Defence and Preservation of a Man's self, which is the prime Obligation of Nature? And what an admirable Example in this Instance, has our Saviour set us, that spotless *Lamb of God*, in his Conversation in the World, and then expressly commands all his Fold to *learn of him*, Mat. 11. 29. and tread in his Blessed Steps. And accordingly, all
along,

along, from the beginning of our Holy Religion till now, none so remarkably inoffensive in their Intercourse with Men, as the truly good Christian.

And if so, what sort of Creatures are those to be esteem'd, who make it their Business to ensnare and prey upon all they can get within their reach ; who delight to do Mischief, and value themselves upon their being able to circumvent their Neighbour to his Prejudice ? These are not the Qualities of harmless *Sheep*, but of Ravenous *Wolves*, and Crafty *Foxes*, and Devouring *Lyons* : And whatever Disguise such Persons may put on, throwing themselves under fair Professions, and specious Pretences, and good Names and Titles, this is not the Temper of Christianity, and no part of the *Wisdom that is from above, which is peaceable and gentle*, and not at all injurious ; but rather a Disposition that is most evidently *Earthly, Sensual, and Devilish*.

Wherefore let no Man deceive himself into an Opinion of his being one of the Flock of Christ, and a Sheep of his Pasture, meerly because he was, when young, admitted into his Fold by Baptism, and has ever since gone in and out with the rest of his Sheep in the outward Exercises of Religion ; for he that hath *not the Spirit*
or

or Temper of Christ is none of his, and a harmless Innocence is the inseparable concomitant of such as are Christians indeed, and truly under the Discipline of the great Shepherd of the Sheep Christ Jesus.

II. Secondly, As a Sheep is a very *harmless* Creature, so 'tis a very *useful* and *profitable* one; and so should every Christian endeavour to be in all his Relations to the best of his Ability. Hence it is that our Lord calls his Disciples *the Salt of the Earth*, such as should season the prophaner World by their pious Conversation; *and a Light that is set in an eminent place*, and therefore, says he, *Let your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven*, by praising God for them, and imitating your Excellent Example. And the Apostle says agreeably, *the manifestation of the Spirit*, or the manifold Gifts and Graces that Christians receive from God, *is given to every Man to profit withal*, 1 Cor. 12. 7. and our great Master has lead the way, in spending his Days, nay his Blood, in doing Good to Mankind.

A Sheep then of the Flock of Jesus, should make it his earnest, and his constant Endeavour, to be as beneficial as he can to all Men. All narrow spirited Selfishness should be quite laid aside amongst Christians;

stians; according to that of the Apostle, *Let no Man seek his own, but every Man another's Welfare,* 1 Cor. 10. 24. And as we are very desirous in our several Necessities and Troubles, and Afflictions, to receive Help and Relief, Comfort and Advice, *from* such as are able to give it us, and think it very hard and unnatural when it is deny'd; so are we oblig'd to go and do likewise *to* others, and to love our Neighbour as our selves. And that we may be capable of being effectually serviceable to others, we must not neglect to enlarge our *Ability*, by improving our selves in what may do any good to our Brethren.

Thus he that would be thoroughly charitable to the Poor, must be prudent in the Management of his own Circumstances; and by Industry and Sobriety, and moderate Care, enable himself more freely to supply another's Wants: Agreeable to the Advice of St. Paul, Eph. 4. 28. *Let a Man labour working with his hands, that he may have to give to him that needeth.*

And he whose Business it is to instruct, and exhort, and advise, should labour diligently to improve his own Mind in all useful Knowledge; and first cure himself of all irregular Affections and Practices, that he may the more effectually and experimentally

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perimentally apply the Cure to others,
Physician heal thy self.

And in a word, he that is made a Steward of any of the good Gifts of God, and intrusted with any Talent by our great Master; must by no means be slothful and idle, much less unfaithful in his Trust, but employ what he has receiv'd to the good of the Community, *that his profiting may appear unto all*, and he may communicate to others of the Bounty which God has bestow'd upon himself.

But if this be true Christianity in this Instance, how strangely unlike it is the general Practice of the World! Where *self* is all that is regarded, and so a Man's own particular private Interest be advanc'd, he cares not what becomes of his Neighbour or the Publick.

What more commonly seen than Mens cringing and fawning when they hope to advantage themselves, but when their own turn's serv'd, they are as hard as Flint to others that desire *their* Help; nay very often, even to those that before assisted *them*?

And how Unchristian and even Unnatural is it, to be heaping up continually great Stores, and adding to ones Abundance, and yet to do still less and less Good, the more our Ability of doing
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it increases ! And on the contrary, how inexcusable is it, by Sloth and Idleness, Carelessness and Extravagancy, to sink a Man's Parts or Fortune to that low Ebb, as to be no longer *capable* of being serviceable to Mankind !

In short, a Christian should be publick minded, and desirous to be some way or other, a universal Friend to all Men ; and by prudent Care, and Industry in his Station, endeavour to make his Ability bear Proportion to those his Desires : That so, as becomes a Sheep of the Flock of Christ, he may be useful and beneficial in his Generation.

III. A *Sheep* is a very governable Creature, not stubborn or unruly, but observant of the Shepherd's Call, and ready to obey it. And so should a Christian be, to all his lawful Superiours, whether in Church or State.

Christianity makes void no Obligations that are not plainly sinful, but rather adds another stronger Tye to 'em ; making that Duty and Subjection to be now for the *Lord's sake, and for Conscience sake*, which before was only for fear of Wrath and Punishment. Many are the places of Scripture which strictly command Obedience to *Civil Governours, whether it be to the King as supreme, or to those that are set in*
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Authority under him ; and as many oblige us to be ordered and directed by our *spiritual* Governours, in Spiritual Things, as those that are commission'd by Christ to watch for our Souls, and instruct us in every part of our Religious Duty. And these Governours are often call'd *Pastors* of the Flock, and our Lord is the *Great Shepherd* that superviseth all the rest ; and he *knows his Sheep*, and they obediently *bear his Voice and follow him* ; as the Custom of the Eastern was and is still, to lead, and not to drive their Sheep.

But now, if this be the true Temper of a Christian, what shall we think of those, who *despise Government, and speak evil of Dignities*, are turbulent and factious in the State, and rend and tear the Church by groundless Schisms and Divisions ; and for the sake of small indifferent things, such as a Posture in Publick Worship, the Colour of the Minister's Garment, and the like, break the Unity of the Spirit, and the Sacred Bond of Peace ?

And what shall we think of those too, who in lesser Societies and Families, are impatient of all Restraint, throw off all Discipline, are head-strong and untractable, and are drawn to Obedience by nothing but meer Force and Compulsion ? And finally, what shall we think of those
that

that spurn at the Commands even of God himself, and are deaf to all the Affectionate Calls of their Saviour, that compassionate good Shepherd, who laid down his Life for his Sheep, to rescue 'em from the Jaws of the Infernal Lyon?

If then an obedient governable Temper be the Temper of a Sheep of Christ's Flock, what kind of Creatures may those be accounted which we but now described? Whatever they may pretend, the Sheep of *Jesus* they cannot be, for this is quite contrary to the submissive Spirit of his Institution; and to his own Example. Who in his tender Years was subject to his Parents in all things, and when he appear'd in the World, was obedient to the Law under which he was born, and to the Government under which he liv'd, and to God, his Heavenly Father to *Death*, even the cruel ignominious *Death of the Cross*; saying, with admirable Self-Resignation, when the bitter Cup of his Sufferings was offered him (the very sight of which put him into so great an Agony, that he sweat great Drops of Blood, and beg'd most earnestly, that if it were possible, that terrible Cup might pass from him). *Nevertheless, not my Will but thine be done.*

Now can any one, after all this, have the Face to stile himself one of Christ's Sheep,

Sheep, who is remarkable for nothing so much as *Disobedience*; and that not only to every *Humane Ordinance*, but even to that Blessed Saviour of his, whose Name he bears? No, no, 'tis plain to whom he belongs, and whose Government he is under, even that of the great Apostate Spirit, who was a Rebel from the beginning, and tempted our first Parents to that Fatal Transgression of their Creator's Command, which we all so sadly smart for ever since, and who still *works in the Children of Disobedience*. His servants we are to whom we obey, and he that will submit to no Government but that of the Prince of Darkness, who makes it his constant Business to embroil and unhinge all Government besides, must expect no other than to have his Portion with that his Governour in his Infernal Kingdom. And whoever hopes to be plac'd among the Sheep, on the Right Hand of Jesus at the Day of Judgment, must first learn to be governable and obedient to him here; and to those likewise who are his Lawful Representatives and Ministers, whom he hath set over us, whether in Church or State.

IV. A Sheep is a *quiet, patient* Creature, not noisy and clamorous, and refractory when under the Shearer's hand, or even when

when going to the Slaughter, or when the deadly Knife is applied to his Throat.

And thus should every Christian be under God's Chastisements, and all the Disposals of his wise and good Providence. No murmurings and repinings, unseemly discontented Language or Behaviour should proceed from any of Christ's Flock, let his Sufferings and his Circumstances here be what they will. 'Tis our business to learn to *possess our Souls in Patience*, and quietly and silently to lie down under the Hand of the great Shepherd, without the least Resistance. And for this too we have the Shepherd's own admirable Example, who when *he was oppressed and afflicted, a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief* (tho' perfectly innocent and unworthy of such Treatment) yet he opened not his Mouth. And when *he was brought as a Lamb to the slaughter, as a Sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he did neither strive nor cry, nor was his Voice to be heard in the streets*, Isa. 53. As *Isaiah* prophecy'd of him long before, and which he fulfilled to a tittle.

What shall we say then of those impatient Creatures to whom every Trouble and Affliction is intolerable, though it be only such as is common to Men; and makes 'em break out into unfitting Complaints,

plaints, and extravagant Reflections, sometimes, even upon God himself? 'Tis well known, such Creatures there are in the World, and but too many; and 'tis a Rarity to meet with a Soul that is truly patient and resign'd. But this is to act more like a *Swine* than a *Sheep*; like those who live a Brutal Life, and place all their Happiness in the Pleasures of Sense here below, rather than those who have such glorious Expectations as a Christian has in a World that is infinitely better.

Where the true Spirit of our Holy Religion is, there will be this Patience; and therefore, whoever finds himself of a contrary Temper under the Afflictions and Troubles he meets with in the World, it concerns him highly, to do what he can to amend and alter it, and earnestly to beg of God to furnish his Soul with this excellent Grace, which is so needful to carry us through the manifold Changes and Chances of this Life, and is a Disposition of Mind as inseparable from true Christianity, as a passive Quietness is from the Nature of a Sheep.

V. But after all, in the last place, tho' a Sheep is an *Innocent, Profitable, Governable* and *Patient* Creature, and therefore very apt to represent a Christian by, who should be all this; yet 'tis a Creature very apt to

to *wander*, and be *lost*, and so are we, God knows, the very best of us, too much!

In this particular we all resemble Sheep too nearly; and were we as like 'em in other respects, as this, it would alleviate the Fault, and incline the good Shepherd to seek and pity, rather than to punish us.

But this is our Condemnation, that we have very little of the *Sheep* in us but a strange Proneness to *go astray*; and leave those Paths we know we ought to walk in, and go in those, which we know are strictly forbidden us, and which too, we can't but know, will certainly bring us to Ruine.

II. Wherefore we will now proceed to consider, how aptly the Condition of those who leave the Paths of their Duty and follow wicked Courses, is compar'd to that of a Sheep that is *stray'd* and *lost*.

I. And first, a *stray'd* and *lost* Sheep is expos'd to many great and unknown Dangers, particularly to the Fury of wild Beasts in those Countries that are infested by them; and what can more lively set forth the sad Condition a wandring Sinner is in than this? He straggles at random, thoughtless of every thing but how to gratify a present unreasonable Brutish Humour; and goes thus heedlessly on from one Vice and Folly to another, till

he is lost before he is aware in a Wilderness of Sin and Delusion, barren of every thing that is truly good ; where his Soul suffers a Famine of the Grace of God, and is torn by the Briars of dismal Cares and Anxieties, Fears and Misgivings of Heart, and often feels the Lashes of a guilty Conscience : And instead of the pure Streams, and green Pastures, to which the good Shepherd us'd constantly to lead him, while he continued in the Flock, nothing but a vast comfortless Desert, in which he must daily pine away till he perish.

That is, instead of the unspeakable Comforts of Religion, the Peace and Quiet of Mind, and the continual Blessing of God, which a good Christian experiences while under the Government of his Saviour ; the wandring Sinner meets with nothing of true Content and Satisfaction, but every thing that is contrary to it ; and in a short time both Body and Soul must feel the dreadful Consequences of his Extravagancy ; Diseases, and Poverty, and a hasty Death, and then, which is worst of all, a sad after-reckoning in another World.

But besides all this, what if this stray Sheep should meet with Beasts of Prey ? What Defence could it make ? Is it swift enough

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enough to save it self by flight? Is it strong enough to defend it self in the Encounter? Or is it cunning enough by some Stratagem and ready Contrivance to avoid the Danger? No, nothing of all this, but submit it must to its miserable Fate without all Remedy. And just so is it with a wandering Sinner. Naked and defenceless he is to every Temptation, and a ready easy Prey to the great Destroyer; who was a *Murderer from the beginning*, and like a roaring Lyon, is continually *going to and fro, seeking whom he may devour.*

And now, let any Man say, whether that is not very dear bought Liberty, for which a Man must pay not only his Quiet, his Safety, and his Innocence, but his *Life*; and that which is infinitely more precious, his *Soul*?

And is it not much better to be guided by the prudent Care of a good Shepherd, and continue safe in the Flock by Day, and in the Fold by Night, under his watchful Eye and sure Protection, and want no manner of thing that is good; than for a little fancied Liberty, to run our selves into so many unavoidable Hazards and Dangers, as were before described?

One would think, no Man in his Wits, would make so ill a Choice as every Sin-

ner does, when he grows weary of Security and Happiness, and presses hard after Misery and Ruin. But so it is, God knows, too often, and so it will be still, as long as Men give themselves up to follow the Stream of their own vile Inclinations and Lusts; and he that once lets loose the Reins to them, tho' but a little, in all Probability will soon be out of call of the Shepherd, and go astray like a Sheep that is lost, and be exposed to all the Misfortunes of that wandring Condition, and that beyond all help.

II. For Secondly, as a lost Sheep is out of the *Government* of the Shepherd, so is it out of his *Protection* too; it is not only out of his *Call*, whereby it may be put in mind of returning to the Flock, and directed where to find it, but whatever Accidents befall it, it can have no Succour, or Relief. And just thus is the Condition of a wandring Sinner. He is not only soon out of reach of good Advice and Reproof, and either will not hear or not regard any Calls or Invitations to return to his Duty; but has forfeited the Protection of the great Shepherd of our Souls Christ Jesus, by throwing off his Government, deserting his Flock and his Fold, and setting up for himself in a new way of Life. *My Sheep*, says he, *hear my Voice*
and

and follow me, and they that do so, none shall be able to pluck them out of my hand, John 10. 28.

But those that neither hear his Voice, nor follow him, but stray about where their own Fancy leads them; these are not of his Sheep, and he regards 'em not, but leaves them to the fatal Issue of their own wicked Choice.

That is, the obstinately vicious, that slight and spurn at all the Methods that are taken to reduce their Wandrings, and will have their own way whatever God or Man can do to reclaim them; these shall sadly feel the want of what they have rejected and abus'd, and smart under the dismal Consequences of their Wickedness.

Indeed the Mercies of God are infinite; and though it is but just that he should abandon those, who first have disown'd him; yet an *intire* Desertion we never read of, but where Men have first given *themselves* up to a *Reprobate Mind*, and are become incurable. And therefore, when the Miseries a lost Sheep suffers make it become sensible of its sad Condition, and cry aloud for Help, the good Shepherd, as the Parable assures us, will seek and bring home upon his Shoulders the poor miserable Creature. *For the Son*

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of Man, says our Lord, *is come to seek and
to save that which was lost* ; Luke 15. 5.
& 19. 10.

But yet, tho' this, to our unspeakable
Comfort, is true, Let no Man vainly pre-
sume upon God's extraordinary Protection
from spiritual Dangers, when he wilfully
runs himself into them, and will not
hearken to the usual Methods that are ap-
pointed to recall him. For there is a
degree of wandering which he will not
restore ; and every Degree of it for the
time, puts us out of his Protection till we
are brought back ; and where our wan-
drings will end, we cannot tell. They
may be fatal to us sooner than we think
for ; for there is no Promise of God's
defending us but when we keep within
the bounds of our Duty.

Wherefore, *let no Man sin*, in hopes that
Grace will abound, lest he provoke God
for ever to deprive him of it. Or in the
Language of the Parable, let none of
Christ's Sheep dare to stray from his Fold
and his Flock, presuming that he will seek
him out, and bring him safe home again ;
lest in Anger he permit him to take his
own course, and leave him to himself, till
he be devour'd by the great Destroyer, or
fall into the Bottomless Pit.

III. For

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III. For Thirdly, every Body knows that a stray Sheep, if not sought and brought back, will daily stray still further on, and is never likely of its self to find the way again to the Fold. 'Tis wholly intent upon picking up what it meets with here and there in the way, every green Turf tempts it still further and further ; till Mischief befalls it, and puts an end to its miserable Life. And just thus it is with a Sinner that wanders from the Paths of God's Commandments. He thinks of nothing but gratifying his present Inclinations and Lusts ; one sensual Delight draws him on to taste of another, and that gives him a View of a third, and that of still more and more, and so he goes on, regaling his Brutish Appetites, and thinks not of the Shepherd or the Fold, till Hunger pinches him, or the Wolf appears ; that is, he takes no thought about God or Religion, till some Affliction or Sicknes awakes him, and Death and Judgment stare him in the Face, and then Fear and Amazement seize him, and fly he would for Refuge but he knows not whither.

O wretched Exchange, of Plenty, Happiness and Safety, for Danger and Want, Horror and Despair, and endless Misery ! If this be the consequence of going astray like a Sheep that is lost, what Reason have

we

we all, who all like Sheep have gone astray, to cry out with the most importunate Earnestness in the Words of *David*, Psal. 119. ult. *O seek thy servants, for we do not forget thy Commandments !*

Having thus shewn upon what Accounts Men under the Discipline of true Religion, especially the Christian, are so often in Scripture compared to *Sheep*, and why such as leave the Paths of their Duty, and take wicked Courses, are said to go astray *like a sheep that is lost*; (whereby we may see how expressive the beginning of the publick Confession of Sins in our Church is, and which if we are not much affected with, 'tis our own Fault) and having made some Improvement of both to our Practice : I come now to conclude with some Remarks upon the good Shepherd in the Parable, his so diligently *seeking* his lost Sheep, and tender Care to bring it safe home to his Flock : *He goeth into the Mountains after it until he find it ; and when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing.*

And indeed, unless our merciful Saviour, in pity to a Sinner's lost undone Condition, first *seeks* him, by his preventing Grace, he can't so much as *desire* to be brought back to the Fold he hath deserted : there is such a bewitching, stupifying Quality

Quality in Sin, that when a Man is once habituated to it, 'tis beyond the Power of *Humane* means effectually to turn him from it ; and he only that *made* the Soul of Man, knows how to give it such a feeling Sense of the Error of his ways, as to incline him in earnest to take a better course.

And when the wandering Creature is brought to a sight of his Danger, and desires never so earnestly to be deliver'd from it ; yet without the Divine Guidance all will be in vain, for all our Sufficiency is of God, without whom we can do nothing.

But then, for our Encouragement, whoever sincerely and importunately implores his Aid shall have it ; he will be found of those that seek him ; the good Shepherd will hear their Cry, and will help them : Only this must always be remembred, that we must co-operate with the Assistances we receive from our compassionate Redeemer ; we must observe his Directions, and give up our selves intirely to his Guidance, and follow him close, with the greatest Care and Circumspection, or else all is to no purpose : We shall stray and be lost again, and our last wandrings will become more fatal than our first.

And

And how can we think, but that he who is truly sensible, that he has lost himself in the ways of Sin beyond all *Recovery*, if left to his own Ignorance and Impotence; and sees by a daily Experience that he is still more and more bewildred in his evil Courses, and unless the great good Shepherd would pity his wretched Condition, and seek him out and bring him back, he must for ever stray till he perish: How can we think but that such a one should cry out with the most passionate Earnestness, and feeling Concern, of one that is in a lost undone Condition, *O seek thy servant!* and be ready gladly to do any thing that might contribute to his Safety!

Indeed, there is no other Remedy in so forlorn a Case as this, but for the Sinner to lift up his Voice and cry aloud to Jesus to seek and to save him; to beg that he would send out his Light and his Truth, that they may lead him and bring him to *his holy Hill, and to his dwelling*, Psalm 43. 3. and make him once more hear *the Voice of Joy and Gladness*.

But how can I expect, may a wretched Sinner say, that Christ should ever seek so vile a Creature as I am! What Advantage will my return be, to that great Shepherd, *whose are the Cattle upon a thousand Hills?* How can I think that he should ever seek
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a starv'd and famish'd Sheep, which by its wilful wandrings from the Fold, and disregard of all his affectionate Calls and Warnings to come back ; may justly have provok'd him to abandon it for ever ! Could I find the way back of *my self*, 'twould be an inestimable Favour to be again receiv'd ; but for such a Miscreant as I to hope to be *sought* after, how can it be ! Oh, no ; 'twould be unpardonable Presumption to expect it.

Thus may a dejected Sinner, when come to a thorough feeling of his sad Condition reason with himself : And when he knows not which way to direct his Steps, and is amaz'd and confounded in his guilty Thoughts ; 'tis but too often that Despair of ever recovering that happy State, which once he despis'd and turn'd his Back upon, makes him lay aside all Endeavours after it, and give himself up as irrecoverably gone, and take what Path shall offer next. And indeed, the highest Presumption it would be, to look for so much tender Care, when we have so little deserv'd it, and so much deserv'd the contrary ; were we not encourag'd thus to hope, by him whose Compassions are infinite. *For thus saith the Lord God, Ezek. 34. 11.* with respect to the Kingdom of his dear Son, and the Favour he would
shew

shew to wretched Mankind, by and through him; *I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick*, Ezek. 34. 16. What unparallel'd Goodness is here, and what ample Encouragement for every wandring Sinner to hope, and cry aloud, even for such great and undeserved Mercy as this!

But as *David*, when he confess'd that he had *gone astray like a sheep that was lost*, and thereby acknowledg'd the miserable Condition he had brought himself to by leaving the way of God's Commandments; and then beg'd earnestly that God would *seek his servant*, restore him to his Integrity, and bring him back to those Paths of Holiness from which he had so shamefully wandred: As *David*, makes it an Argument to incline God to be thus gracious to him, that he *did not forget his Commandments*, Psal. 119. ult. so there can be no greater Inducement to our merciful Saviour to bring back one of his lost Sheep by his special Grace, to a due Sense and Performance of his Duty, than his being heartily desirous to return to a new Life; not altogether forgetful of the manifold Obligations that lie upon him to Obedience, and sensible that after all the

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Experiments he has try'd, sincere Religion is his only Happiness.

'Twas this Temper of Mind that rendered the return of the Prodigal Son so successful ; and a Sinner thus dispos'd, need not doubt of all needful Help, to secure his safe Retreat ; from *him* who has assur'd us for our greater Encouragement, that he rejoyceth more at the finding one lost Sheep, *than for ninety and nine that never went astray.*

Wherefore, whatever Temptations a Sinner may comply with to forsake the Paths of God's Commandments, and wander in the ways of Sin ; let him have a care of wholly *forgetting* his Obligations of Obedience to God, and quite throwing off all sense of his Duty. That is, let him have a care of a hardned Heart and a sear'd Conscience, of making a mock at Sin, and laughing and drolling upon Religion, and deriding those that make more Conscience of their ways than he does, and advise him better ; For this is the way to fix him irrecoverably in vile courses, and will make all Methods to reclaim him ineffectual : 'Twill at length bring upon him an utter Oblivion to every thing that is good, and seal him up to Destruction.

And what a miserable hopeless Condition are they in, who have sin'd themselves
into

into an *Insensibility* of their sad State; and have not only wandred beyond all Possibility of returning of themselves, but can't so much as cry out to the good Shepherd to seek and save them, having quite forgotten all things that are Religious and good!

Indeed, there will be a time when their Consciences shall be awaken'd from this dead Sleep; and then they'll call and cry, in the Bitterness of their Souls for Mercy: But then, alas! 'twill be too late. They have let slip the happy Opportunity of Grace and Salvation that once was put into their hands; and then there will be no retrieving it, but submit they must to the dreadful Punishment, which their incorrigible Wickedness has deserv'd.

This is a very melancholy Consideration, but 'tis a very true one; and may we all so seriously lay it to Heart now, as to prevent our experiencing the Truth of it hereafter!

And let us imitate the good Shepherd in the Parable, and as far as in us lies endeavour to reduce our wandring Brother: And by affectionate Advice and friendly Reproof, to make him sensible of his lost Condition, unless he returns by a speedy Repentance, and bring him off from those vicious Practices, which if persisted in,

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will certainly bring him to Ruine. This we may all of us do, in some measure, not the Clergy only but the Laity too; and 'tis every one's Duty not to *suffer Sin upon his Neighbour*, Lev. 19. 17. but to *rebuke* him for it; and if the Law of *Moses* oblig'd us to to this, much more does the Law of *Christ*. And nothing can be a greater Charity, nor a Work more acceptable to God, and our Blessed Saviour, than to *convert a sinner from the error of his ways, and save a soul from Eternal Death*. This is to be Workers together with him for the good of Mankind; it shews that we are animated with the same Spirit, and are sincerely desirous that the Kingdom of Christ may flourish, and that all may be obedient Sheep under the Government of the great good Shepherd Jesus Christ.

'Tis true, this good Work must be managed with Discretion, if we would have it thoroughly successful; and the *Time*, the *Manner*, the *Person*, and other incidental things must be consider'd, to carry it on smoothly, and without Offence. But after all, we may be too nice and curious in this Matter, as well as too downright and blunt; and more good a great deal might we this way do one another, than we do; were we not too much afraid of disobliging. Indeed 'tis an ungrateful Office

to tell People of their Faults, and they cannot tell how to bear it even from those who have the highest Authority for doing it, the Bishops and Pastors of Christ's Flock, much less from those who are upon a *Level* with themselves, and only Sheep as they are. However, he that truly loves his Neighbour, and heartily desires his Happiness, will not see him make haste to be undone for ever, and not stop him a little, and acquaint him with his Danger, even with some Warmth and Earnestness, for fear of his Displeasure. And tho' the Man may be very angry at first with the impertinent busy-body, as perhaps he may call him, for giving him Disturbance in a way he so much delights in ; yet in cool Blood he may consider better of it, and it may do him good. He may then begin to see his Error, which he took but little notice of before, and find Reason to be thankful for the *Faithful Wounds of his Friend* ; Prov. 27. 6. for as Solomon long ago observ'd, *He that rebuketh a Man, afterward shall find more favour, than he that flattereth with the Tongue*, Prov. 28. 23.

But, whether 'tis well receiv'd or not, seasonable Reproof is a very great Charity, and shall not lose its Reward ; and 'tis so much a Christian's *Duty* too to give it when there is just Occasion, that the

Omission

Omission of it, in the *Laity*, as well as the *Clergy*, is a very great Fault, and of very ill Consequence : and such an Irreligious Connivance at our Brother's Sins, and uncompassionate Disregard of his dangerous and most deplorable Condition, shall be severely accounted for, when Enquiry shall be made into our Works of Mercy, of which this is none of the least.

Mat. 25.

And as the good Shepherd, when he had found his stray Sheep, laid it upon his Shoulders, and brought it home rejoicing, and told the good News to his *Friends and Neighbours*, saying, *Rejoyce with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost* ; so 'tis an inexpressible Pleasure to any truly good Man to be instrumental in the Recovery of a poor deluded Creature, who was almost dead in Trespasses and Sins ; and had it not been for *his* kind Admonitions, in all Probability would have been irrecoverably lost.

This is matter of true Joy indeed : And every good Christian, and even the Angels in Heaven, and our Blessed Lord himself, will gladly bear a part in it ; for he hath told us, *that there shall be Joy in Heaven over one Sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just Persons which need no Repentance*, Luke 15. 7. The greater

and more hopeless the Danger is, the greater and more surprizing will be the Joy, when 'tis escaped; and that in the Deliverer as well as him that is deliver'd: And the rescue of a wretched perishing Soul out of the very Talons of the Prince of the Powers of the Air, is so much to the Honour of God, the Shame and Disappointment of the Devil, and the poor Creatures Happiness, that it may justly cause extraordinary rejoicing. As a Man would be more sensibly affected with the Recovery of a Child from the Brink of the Grave, than with the continued Health of all the rest of his Family.

The P R A Y E R.

I.

AND thou, most Holy, and most Compassionate Jesus, thou great and good Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls, who camest down from Heaven to seek and to save that which was lost, and not to call the righteous but sinners to Repentance: Have Mercy upon me, a poor wandring deluded Creature, and leave me not to my own Counsels, lest my Errors and my Ignorances increase, and my Sins abound to my Destruction, and I fall before my Adversary, and the Enemy of Souls
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rejoice over me, as his miserable Prey, whose tender Mercies are cruel.

I have shamefully strayed, O Lord thou knowest, from my Duty, and the way of thy Commandments; and now groan under the sad Consequences of this my wickedness and Folly: I am lost and bewildred, even past Hopes of return, unless thou seek me out by the powerful Calls of thy Spirit, and bring me back by his unerring Conduct. O therefore send that Blessed Spirit down, that he may rest upon me, and effectually move me to a Reformation of every evil Work! And grant that I may intirely give my self up to his Guidance, chearfully following wherever he shall lead me; and never provoke him to leave me and forsake me!

II.

Convince me, I beseech thee, daily more and more, of my true Interest, and my great end! That I may waste my days no longer in empty vain Pursuits; but live up for the future to the Dignity of my Nature, and most Holy Profession, in Innocence and Purity, Patience, Humility and Obedience, doing Injury to none, but all the good I am able in my Generation: As becomes one of thy Flock, who wert holy and harmless, meek and lowly in Heart; and mad'st it thy whole Business to glorify thy Father, and do

good to Mankind, setting us an Example that we should follow thy steps. And O, do thou enlarge my Soul that I may tread in those thy blessed steps, and run with cheerfulness the way of thy Commandments! Then shall I truly walk at Liberty, when I have regard to thy Precepts above all things, for thy Service is perfect Freedom! so shall I glorify thee with my Body and my Spirit, which are thine; so shall I live worthy of the Blessed Name by which I am called, and as befits a Candidate for a Crown that fadeth not away, Eternal in the Heavens; and which thou, Blessed Jesus, with wondrous Love, hast purchas'd for me with thy most precious Blood.

Lord! Let thy tender Eye of Mercy always look upon me, as I sincerely put my Trust in thee. Convert my Soul, and lead me in the Paths of Righteousness for thy Name's sake: I have gone too long astray from thee, like a Sheep that is lost; O do thou seek thy Servant, for I do not forget thy Commandments!

Amen, Dearest Redeemer, Amen.

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PARABLE X.

Of the Unjust Steward.

Luke xvi. 1, &c.

And he said unto his Disciples, there was a certain Rich Man which had a Steward, and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his Goods.

And he called him, and said unto him, how is it that I hear this of thee? Give an Account of thy Stewardship, for thou mayst be no longer Steward.

Then the Steward said within himself, what shall I do? For my Lord taketh away from me the Stewardship, I cannot dig, to beg I am ashamed.

I am resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the Stewardship, they may receive me into their Houses.

So he call'd every one of his Lord's Debtors unto him, and said unto the first, how much owest thou unto my Lord? And he said, an hundred Measures of Oil; and he said unto him, take thy Bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty.

Then said he unto another, and how much owest thou? And he said an Hundred Measures of Wheat; and he said unto him, take thy Bill, and sit down quickly, and write fourscore.

And the Lord commended the Unjust Steward because he had done wisely; for the Children of this World, are in their Generation wiser than the Children of Light. And I say unto you, make to your selves Friends of the Mammon of Unrighteousness, that when ye shall fail they may receive you into everlasting Habitations.

THE Ancient Fathers look'd upon this as the most difficult and obscure of all our Saviour's Parables; and so have several Modern Writers since, and *Cajetan* particularly (a great Doctor of the Roman Church) confesses he can't tell what to make of it: And out of the Abundance of his Modesty, and profound Respect to our Lord, because *he* can't, thinks no Body else can, and says that 'tis not only difficult, but impossible to give its true meaning. As if Christ spake so unintelligibly in it, that he could never be understood.

But I suppose the Reason of this was, their attempting to make every Circumstance in the Parable suit exactly with the

Scope

Scope and Design of it, and answer directly in every thing : Which though in some Parables it does, yet must not be expected from the most ; which are only intended to represent, by some familiar resemblance or comparison, a Piece of useful Doctrine and Instruction. And therefore if we can find out what *that* is, 'tis sufficient ; and as for the manner of expressing it, we must not squeeze, and strain and torture that too much, but be content with what comes freely and naturally from it. But tho' the *Substance*, or Kernel of a Parable is that which is to be chiefly look'd after in the Explication of it, yet the *Circumstantials*, the Shell and outside, must not be wholly disregarded ; being like that of some noble Plants and Fruits, not without its Excellence and Use.

Now the main Drift and Design of this Parable seems to be two-fold ; *First*, to reprove Mens strange Carelesness and Indifference to Religion, and Thoughtless Laziness in the Prosecution of it, tho' the greatest Concern of all ; by comparing it with the cunning Contrivance and great Industry of Men that give themselves up to the World to gain the Point they aim at, tho' a meer Trifle in comparison with this : *For the Children of this World are wiser in their Generation, &c. v. 8.* And
Secondly,

Secondly, to shew, the great Wisdom of improving the present Blessings, and good things God has here below committed to our Trust and Management, to the Furtherance of our Eternal Future Happiness above; *Make to your selves Friends with the Mammon of Unrighteousness, &c. v. 9.*

I. The First of these is represented thus. *There was a certain Rich Man which had a Steward, and the same was accus'd unto him that he had wasted his Goods; upon which he called him to account, and told him he should be no longer Steward. This made the Steward full of Thought what he should do hereafter for a Livelihood; He could not dig (forsooth) he was too good for that, and had not been bred to work, but to Idleness and Ease, and was better at cheating and purloining, than honest Industry and Labour (as is the Case of too many Servants still;) and to beg he was ashamed, as Pride, and Fraud, and Idleness usually go together. What then should he do? Why this at last he resolved on; Namely, to be true to his Principles, (tho' very bad ones) and to go on in cheating and defrauding his Lord; and accordingly he call'd every one of his Lord's Debtors privately to him, and ask'd them one by one, How much owest thou unto my Lord? And when they had told him, he gave them*

them the Writing which he had of them, in which they acknowledg'd themselves so and so indebted to his Lord, and bid them change the several Sums into a less; as he that ow'd *an Hundred Measures of Oyl*, he bid him turn it into *Fifty*; he that ow'd an Hundred Measures of Wheat, he bid him set down Fourscore instead of it, and so on. And by this he oblig'd them, not only upon account of Kindness and Gratitude (which was no more to be depended upon then, than now) but by a direct Compact and Bargain, *to receive him into their Houses*, when his Lord had turn'd him off. And by this cunning Contrivance, he made that same Falshood and Dishonesty, which was the occasion of the Loss of his Stewardship, the means of his future Support. And the *Policy* and *Craft* of this way of proceeding, his Lord could not but commend, tho' not the *Honesty* of it you may be sure; and our Saviour makes this first excellent Remark upon it, *the Children of this World are wiser in their Generation than the Children of Light*. That is, Men that place all their Happiness here below, and mind nothing but the World, are a great deal shrewder in their way, and manage their sordid Affairs with much more Thought, and Contrivance, and Application, than *the Children of Light*, those that

that profess to seek a better Country, the Regions of Eternal Glory, do their Heavenly Interest, tho' it be of such infinitely greater Consequence.

And then, from the particular Course the Unfaithful Steward took to ingratiate himself with his Lord's Debtors, and with his Lord's Substance to make a good Provision for himself hereafter ; our Saviour takes occasion to give us another very Excellent, and Useful piece of Advice ; Namely, that since we are but Stewards of the good things of this World, which God hath intrusted us with, to promote his Glory, and to be beneficial to one another as we have opportunity, and of which we must render Account to him at last : We would imitate the *Prudence*, tho' not the *Unfaithfulness* of the Steward in the Parable, and be so wise as *to make Friends with the Mammon of Unrighteousness*, to improve that Portion of Worldly Wealth, which God shall give us, and which is too often abus'd to very ill Purposes, and the occasion of much Wickedness ; to improve it by Charity and good Works, to the promoting our Eternal Happiness in Heaven, *That when we fail*, and the time comes that we must be strip'd of every good thing here below, and return into the World of Spirits as naked as when we

first

first came into *this* ; *They*, the Blessed Angels, the Ministers of God's Kingdom, *may receive us into those everlasting Habitations*, and give us Possession of those immense Rewards which are prepar'd for faithful and wise Servants, and welcome us to the Joy of our Lord.

Having thus seen the two-fold Design of our Blessed Saviour in speaking this Parable ; we shall, without taking any further notice of the Particulars of the *Narration*, apply our selves to consider those things which he intended to represent by it ; and more especially

I. The *First* of them ; which is the strange Carelessness, and thoughtless Indifference and Coolness, with respect to the great Business of Religion and Eternal Salvation, which is but too visible even in those that profess to be *Children of the Light*, to be Christians, Disciples of the Holy Jesus, and Candidates for Heaven : When the *Men of the World*, who make Riches their Heaven, and Mammon their God, are quite another thing, all Life and Diligence, and Prudence in the Prosecution of those Trifles in comparison. Nay, when the Children of the Light themselves are *all this*, in the Management of their *secular* Affairs ; and inconsiderate Drones only in the Pursuit of Happiness
Eternal.

Eternal. This is unaccountable indeed, and deserves the severest Reproof. For what Interest can be greater than that which the Children of Light, as such, profess to pursue? What of so great Consequence as Everlasting Salvation? And *what will it profit a Man if he should gain the whole World, and lose his Immortal Soul*; and what in it is of value sufficient to be accepted in exchange for it, when it is once lost, to redeem it?

To *save* our Souls is to make our selves for ever *happy* in the largest and highest Sense of that Blessed Word; that is, as full as we can hold of the most exalted Pleasure and Delight, the most perfect Satisfaction and Joy that our Natures are capable of; in the Society of Saints and Angels, of Jesus our dear Redeemer, and of God himself; in a place of infinite and inexpressible Glory, and all this without the least Allay, Intermission or Disturbance, to Ages without end. And to *lose* our Souls, is the direct Reverse.

That is, it is to make our selves for ever *Miserable*, in the largest and most comprehensive Sense of that dreadful Word, and as full as we can hold of the most exquisite Torment, Vexation and Remorse that our Natures are capable of; in the Company of the worst of Men, of Hellish
Fiends

Fiends and Furies, and of our greatest Enemy and Destroyer the Devil; in a Place of infinite and inexpressible Horror and Dread, and all this without the least Mitigation, Intermission, or Hope, to all Eternity.

Now what can more concern us, than to attain such a Happiness, and escape such a Misery as this? And what is there in this World that is comparable to either? The Truth is, Man's only true Interest is the Interest of his Soul, and every thing here below, ought to be so far valu'd, and no further, than as it may be instrumental to his future Happiness. For what is a short uncertain Life here, in this State of Tryal and Probation, whether it be prosperous or afflicted, in comparison with the Happiness or Misery of a boundless Eternity! How will all the Glories and Gayeties of the present World vanish like a Shadow when our Eyes shall be clos'd by Death! And if abus'd to Luxury, and Pride, and Oppression, and the Extinction of true Goodness; they will be immediately changed into the intolerable Stings and Upbraidings of a desperately guilty Conscience, which will be pricking and wounding the distracted Soul for ever.

And on the other hand, what Nothings will the Troubles and Afflictions of this
World

World seem, the Labours of Repentance, the Struggles we have had with our corrupt Affections, the Straits of a scanty Fortune, the ill Treatment we have met with from unreasonable and wicked Men, and the like ; what *Nothings* will every thing of this Nature seem to a pious Soul when admitted into Heaven ! Where all Tears shall be wip'd from his Eyes, and Sorrow for ever chas'd away by the Welcomes of his Redeemer Jesus !

So that *this* World, take it which way we will, and on whatever side we view it, is really as nothing to us, and the other is our *All*. As we use the present well or ill, it will be instrumental indeed to our future Happiness, or Ruine ; but those Futurities are the chief Object of our Care and Concern, and things present are to be regarded with respect to *them*. Here we are plac'd to make our Fortunes for Eternity ; *that* is our great End, and proper Business, and he that does not *that*, does nothing. He fools away his Life in a vain Pursuit of Trifles, and is fatally busy in filling up the Measure of his Iniquities, and then drops away into the dreadful Place of Eternal Weeping, and Wailing, and Gnashing of Teeth.

Salvation then being of such infinite Importance, and our greatest Concern of
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all, to which nothing else is comparable ; one would think it should have a suitable Regard. But yet, what more common than for People to mind every thing more than their Salvation, and to be so indifferent to nothing, as to that ! To let every little inconsiderable thing take place of the Care of their Souls, as if they were not worth the caring for, or that a very little Care when they had nothing else to do, would be sufficient !

What Industry, and Warmth, and Eagerness do we see in Men upon all other Occasions, when bustling for the things of the World ; what Contrivance to manage all Opportunities to the best Advantage, and improve every the smallest Matter that seems to lead to Honour, Wealth or Pleasure : But all the Coldness and listless Dullness imaginable to whatever relates to our Eternal Interest in the World to come ; as if we were perfect Infidels, and look'd upon things of this Nature, as a Fable or a Dream.

And in this stupid and truly dreadful Condition, Men seem to be easy and quiet, nay to be afraid of being rous'd out of it ; and by an affected Forgetfulness of its being the *one thing needful*, endeavour to make themselves still more and more insensible. As if they were resolv'd effectually

to ruine themselves notwithstanding all the Care that God and Man can take to prevent it ; and in the midst of such Advantages, as the Christian Church hath not enjoy'd greater, since the times of the Apostles.

What can be at the bottom of this, but downright rank Infidelity, or strange Thoughtlessness and Stupidity ? And if 'twere only among *the Children of this World*, who don't pretend to any thing beyond the present, it would not be so much to be wondred at ; but for those that profess to be *Children of Light*, and to have the Hopes and Expectations of a Christian, for these to take so little notice of their Heavenly Reversion, is strangely unaccountable. *The Children of this World are much wiser in their Generation*, and the *Children of Light* too, can be wise and diligent enough in the Management of the Affairs of this World ; but as for the great Business of Salvation, 'tis slighted and neglected by almost every Body, or at least is not pursu'd with that Vigour as it ought to be, and as both the Children of this World, and the Children of Light, pursue the worthless perishing things here below.

But, do we really hope to be sav'd, and know what Salvation means, and yet do scarce any thing in order to it, nay rather do

do every thing almost that will deprive us of it, and bring us to Destruction? When God and Jesus have done so much to save us (and which demonstrates of what infinite Moment it is to us) shall we do nothing for our selves? But violently pull down upon our Heads that Ruine, which so many Miracles have been wrought to preserve and secure us from! Strange Madness this!

Perhaps now and then we may purpose well, and resolve upon a more serious and hearty Prosecution of our Salvation for the future; and when we have heard a moving Sermon, or read a pious Book, or have had some good Advice from those that truly desire our Happiness, this may so far work upon us as to cause a few Sighs, and some good Wishes, and Desires, and it may be Resolutions, and thereupon we think our selves very well inclin'd, and in a hopeful Condition: When after all we continue just as we were before, no visible Amendment of our evil ways, nor any, or but very faint Endeavours towards it.

But can any one be so weak as to think he shall go to Heaven with a Wish? That that Salvation which cost our Lord so dear, for which he suffer'd what would move Compassion in the most flinty Breast at the bare Relation of it, shall without any

more to do become ours, whenever we faintly and lazily desire it?

One would wonder what such People are made of, who in this greatest Concern of all, act so quite otherwise than they would do in any other Matter of Importance. Tell them of a great Advantage, as to this World, so and so to be gain'd, or of a great Loss or Misfortune they are in danger of, which by such and such means may be prevented, you'll find much more than cool Wishes, and idle Desires; all their Powers will be summoned together to assist in a vigorous Prosecution of the thing. But when Heaven and Hell, Salvation and Damnation is the Business, a Wish and a Sigh is all.

You'll say perhaps, those good Wishes and Desires may come to something in time, and are a Sign that Conscience is not quite fear'd and insensible; that there is some Spiritual Life and Feeling in the Soul, and as long as there's Life, there's Hope. But, when the Life is next Door to Death, the Hope is next Door to Despair; however, the more Sense and Feeling there is in the Conscience, if it does not influence the Man's Conversation, and produce Repentance and Amendment, 'tis so far from being an Argument for his hoping well of his Condition, that it rather shews it
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to be extremely dangerous ; when he thus sins on against all his Convictions, and a clamorous and awaken'd Conscience, and proceeds in the way to Destruction just as he us'd to do, only with this Aggravation, that his Eyes are now open, and he sees and knows where he is going.

Well, but it may be at length, Religion has wrought so far upon us, that now we solemnly resolve for the future to break off our former ill Courses, and live as becomes Christians. Let us effectually do this, and we shall be happy. But how do we perform these Resolutions ? Even just as Children keep their Promises of doing so no more, when they are chid or corrected for their Faults ; the next time a Temptation attacks us, the good Resolution is forgotten, and we yield as formerly. And then, when afterwards our Conscience upbraids us, we resolve again, and then again break our Resolutions ; and so round and round continually in this vain Circle, and all the while deceive our selves into an Opinion, that because our Resolutions are good, our Condition is not much amiss.

But those Resolutions are very far from Good, which are over and over broken as soon as made ; and his Condition far from safe, who trifles thus with God and

his own Conscience, and that in a Matter of the greatest Moment. But because God is infinitely good, and merciful, and long-suffering, therefore we thus presume upon him ; forgetting that he is infinitely holy and just too, that he hates Iniquity with a perfect Hatred, and has sworn, that the incorrigibly wicked shall never enter into his Rest.

But after all ; 'tis to be hop'd the time will come at last when we shall be wiser, and hereafter these Resolutions of ours will stand firm, and be punctually made good. At present we are so incumbered with the World, and link'd to such and such Companions, and engag'd in such a way of Life, that we can't do as we would do ; but we purpose, by degrees, to disentangle our selves, and then we will in earnest set about the *One thing needful*.

That is, in plain *English*, when I have gained such an Estate, and have had my swing in such and such Vices, and am tyr'd and surfeited with them, and am no longer able to enjoy them ; then for Religion and another World. When I'm grown Rich, and Old, and Infirm, and have nothing else to do, and am fit for nothing else ; then I'll begin to take care of my Salvation.

Then

Then I'll begin ! As if I had Life perfectly at my Command, was sure I should live till then, and had Salvation so intirely in my own Power, as that with a very little Trouble I could secure it when I pleas'd ! But suppose I should die to Morrow, in the midst of my neglects of Religion, and in the full Carriere of my Vices, what would become of me then ?

Or suppose I should live to be too old for the World, and then begin to think of applying my self to good things, but find that God has left me to my self, and that my Soul is as dead to Religion as ever : That I only change one Wickedness for another, Lust for Avarice, Intemperance for Malice and Spite, but as for purifying my guilty Soul by a deep and sincere Repentance, I'm so much hardned that 'tis too late for that. Suppose such a Condition as this should grow upon me with my grey Hairs (and too many Instances there are of this Nature) and nothing consequently but Terrors inexpressible should then fill my Breast ; and when I think upon God and the Eternal World, into which I am just dropping, should feel nothing but horrid forebodings of the Wrath to come : What shall I then think of my past Conduct with respect to my Salvation ? And how shall I curse, in the bitterest An-

guish of my Soul, that fatal Indifference to it formerly, that provoking Neglect of it, which now hath depriv'd me of it, and seal'd me up to Ruine !

Would *the Children of this World*, thus depend upon uncertain Futurities, and let slip a present favourable Opportunity in a Matter of any considerable Consequence, much less when their whole Worldly Interest was at Stake, and their Making, or their Ruine did depend upon their good or ill Success ? Nay would we our selves be idle and unconcern'd, and put things off, and not do our utmost immediately in such a Case as this ? No question, but we should be much wiser for *this* World, than we generally are for the *next* ; nay we find that we are so, by every Day's Experience. But what unaccountable Folly and Sottishness this is, we have seen already.

What then is to be done by us, and how must we prosecute this great Affair of our Salvation ? Must we shut our selves up from every thing that is secular, and throw aside all Worldly Business, and deny our selves all Pleasures but those of Religion, and be continually upon our Knees, and converse only with Heaven ? No, this is to stretch the thing too far the other way, and would be inconsistent with many other
Obli-

Obligations that God hath laid upon us ; 'tis the *excessive* Application to Worldly Business, and *immoderate* Pursuit of Pleasure that we are oblig'd to avoid, which are indeed the greatest Hindrances of the great Work of our Salvation. We should therefore be so wise, as to *use* the World without *abusing* it, and take heed of being *Lovers of Pleasure, more than Lovers of God.*

I. And First, 'twill be our Wisdom to avoid too great Earnestness in following the *Business* of the World. There is a great deal of Difference between a moderate Industry and Diligence in our several Callings and Employments, and such a total Application to them, that we can mind nothing else. The former is our Duty, and the latter will be our Ruine. For this we may have always observ'd, that the more People are greedy of the World, and in haste to raise Estates, and therefore plunge themselves into an Ocean of Business, and the Hurries and Encumbrances, and Temptations, that on all sides beat upon them : The deeper Men are in this manner engag'd, the sooner they make Shipwreck of a good Conscience ; and the Sense of Divine Things decays and waists away apace, and at length, too often dwindles into nothing.

And

And indeed, How can it be otherwise? How can he expect to be a truly Pious Christian, that will allow himself to think of nothing but the World? Religion does not work unaccountably and irresistibly, like a *Charm*, which steals its Effects upon us insensibly whether we will or no; but must be cherish'd and improv'd in a rational way, as all other Endowments of the Mind are, by Study, and Meditation, and close Application of Thought: And if *Salvation* is not worth this, as well as other things, 'tis very strange.

'Tis true, *God works in us to will, and to do of his good Pleasure*, and 'tis by his Grace and Assistance that we are enabled to serve him acceptably; but what then? Must we therefore expect *miraculous* Calls, and such powerful Impulses as cannot be resisted; and that whilst we go on in a Course that God has expressly forbidden, and assur'd us will end in our Destruction?

Do we think God so fond of our Happiness, as to increase the Measure of his Grace, the more we neglect and despise it; to shower it down in greatest Plenty on our Souls, when we least regard it, and seldom or never desire it, and make no manner of good use of it when we have it, but rather abuse it to a presumptuous Continuance in a Life of careless Irreligion?

gion ? What strange Notions are these ?
What fatal Delusions !

But since Religion, as was said, is not design'd wholly to *exclude* Business, how shall we adjust the Matter between them ? Why in short, as our Saviour has already adjusted it, *Matt. 6. 33.* Where he says, after having caution'd his Hearers against over-carefulness for the World, *Seek ye FIRST the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness.* That is, as to serve God acceptably, and save our Souls, is our *main Concern*, so in all Reason it should engage our *chief Care*, and the best of our Endeavours ; and all things else being of infinitely less Moment and Importance than this, should give place to it, and have no greater Application and Regard, than may be subservient to, or at least is very well consistent with, our Duty to God, and our own Eternal Welfare. But when we invert this Order, and mind the World above all things, give it the first place in our Affections, and take little or no notice of Religion ; this is utterly inexcusable, and will be of very fatal Consequence. And therefore 'tis excellent Advice that the Apostle gives us, *Rom. 12. 11.* not to be *slothful in Business*, and yet withal, *servant in Spirit, serving the Lord.*

II. But

II. But Secondly, as too much, so too *little* Business, and a Habit of Idleness, and constant Course of Pleasure is to be carefully avoided by him that would be wise to Salvation.

For People that have no Employment, and whose Time lies upon their hands like a useless Drug; tho' they may indeed improve that Leisure to very happy Purposes, yet 'tis seldom seen that they do so: And sinful Pleasures, to which they have abundance of Temptation, do too often waste the precious Opportunity of laying up vast Treasures of Happiness in Heaven.

Whatever therefore Mens Circumstances and Quality may be, some useful way or other should be found out, of spending those many Hours, which for want of a settled Course of Business, would otherwise be lost, or spent amiss. What vast Improvements in divers Parts of Knowledge might those Men make who are disengag'd from the Hurries of the World, and have Time at their Command, and may enjoy Solitude and Privacy, when, and as long as they please! And what a delicious Life must that needs be, which is divided between *Religion*, and *noble Studies*; the furnishing our Minds with the most excellent and beneficial Truths, and the saving of our Souls! But how pitifully

mean

mean is it on the contrary, and below the Dignity of a Rational Creature, either to be sick of one's Time, and drone and saunter it away, as perfectly at a Loss how to dispose of it; or else, to waste it by Day, in what they call Sports and Recreations, and by Night, in Riot, Uncleannefs and Excess !

Not that all Diversions are wholly to be laid aside by a wise and good Man ; for Health sometimes requires them, and the weary'd Mind, or the Body rather, whose Spirits are exhausted by much Study, and close thinking, stands in need of such Refreshments, that it may again apply it self with fresh Vigour to those nobler Employments. But then, they must be us'd only as *Refresh-*

ments, now and then, and sparingly ; as we taste of a Rich Cordial to chear our drooping Spirits, but not in full

Draughts, as we drink of common Liquors to assuage our Thirst.

To make Recreations and Sports a Man's *Business*, is a kind of Contradiction ; for the Notion of a *Recreation*, is a short Refreshment of Nature, when tyr'd and weary'd out with Business : And therefore to make that our Business, which is design'd to

*Uti quidem Illis licet,
sed sicut somno, & Qui-
etibus ceteris ; tum, cum
gravibus, seriisq; Rebus
satis fecerimus. Cic. I.
Offic.*

to relieve us sometimes *from* the Fatigues of Business, is very odd and preposterous.

No doubt, but our Life is given and continu'd to us for much higher Purposes; and whoever considers seriously what those Purposes are, and particularly that he has an Immortal Soul to save, through the Merits of Jesus, and which, if not *sav'd*, must sink for ever into bottomless Misery; and withal reflects what 'tis to save that Soul, what great Changes must be made in it e'er it can be *capable* of Salvation, a new and God-like Temper form'd, and many things bewail'd, and quite left off, which once were look'd upon as the chief Happiness of Life, and in their stead new Loves and new Desires planted, directly contrary to those that once were delighted in so much: Whoever will but seriously consider thus, and withal look upon the Shortness and great Uncertainty of Life, and see how near Eternity is to him, I can't but think will be more than a little startled, and confess it strange Imprudence, and even next door to Madness, to trifle away in Vanity and Fooleries, much more to waste in Vice and Luxury, those Minutes which for ought he knows may be his last; or however bring him still nearer and nearer to that which will be so indeed. O that we were so wise as seriously to ponder this,
and

and consider our latter end ! *So teach us, Lord, to number our Days, that we apply our Hearts unto Wisdom ! O spare us a little that we may recover our Strength, before we go hence, and are no more seen !*

To these Considerations, concerning the great Folly of that Coolness and Indifference in the Prosecution of the *One thing needful*, which is too visible in the Generality of Men ; before I proceed to the next thing that is to be consider'd in this Parable, I shall add one Advice more, and that is that Men would have a care of being ashamed to own and amend their unwise Conduct in this most important Business ; and not drop their good Resolutions of a better Life as soon as they have taken them up, for fear of the Censures and Ridicules, the Slights and Abuses of their former lewd Associates. As if 'twere a Point of Honour, to persist in the wrong, rather than own themselves in a Mistake; and they dreaded the being laugh'd at as timorous Precisians, by a few loose Wretches, more than the sad Sentence, *Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting Burnings.*

In male Captis Honestior illis Perseuerantia Videtur, quam Penitentia.
Seneca.

But shall I damn my Soul for ever, through a base Cowardly Fear of what a Company of vile People will say of me, should

should I grow serious and repent? Would the Children of this World be ashamed to acknowledge an Error in the Methods they take in pursuing any secular Interest, and take no Care to correct it, tho' they see their Ruine will follow it, for fear of the Jeers and Flouts of those who make what haste they can to be undone themselves, and don't care to see any Body take better Courses than they do? No, they are much wiser in *their Generation*, and why should not we be so in *ours*; who have an infinitely greater Interest at stake, than that of Ten Thousand Worlds?

Rather let us despise all Treatment of that Nature as below our notice; and consider what Joy our Conversion will cause in Heaven, and to all wise and good Men, and what Transports we our selves shall feel, when at the great Day of Recompence we shall hear these Blessed Words, *Well done, good and faithful Servant, enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord!* And withal reflect upon those words of our Saviour, Mark 8. last v. *Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful Generation; of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the Glory of his Father, with the Holy Angels.*

II. I shall now briefly consider the other thing our Lord design'd to represent by
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this Parable, namely, the great Wisdom of improving the present Blessings and good things God hath here committed to our Trust and Management, to the Furtherance of our Eternal Future Happiness, and so conclude. *I say unto you*, says Christ, *Make to your selves Friends of the Mammon of Unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting Habitations.* That is, so far imitate the unjust Steward in the Parable, as wisely to make a good Provision for your selves in the *other* World, with those fading, perishing Riches which you can't keep always, but must leave behind you when you go from *this*; and by Deeds of Charity make *him* your Friend, who will one Day call you to give Account of your Stewardship, that so his Holy Angels may conduct and receive you into their Eternal Habitations above.

And indeed, nothing more likely than *Charity* to procure a favourable Reception with our Lord at the Day of Judgment. For besides that it is an Observance of his *peculiar* Commandment, and an Argument of our sincere Love to him, and an Imitation of him in doing good to Mankind, all which must needs render us acceptable to him; for so he tells us, *He that keepeth my Commandments he it is that loveth me,*

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and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest my self (very Graciously no doubt) *unto him ; and this is my Commandment that ye love one another :* Besides this, he hath expressly told us that when he comes to judge the World in Righteousness, he will make particular Enquiry into our Works of *Charity* ; and make mention of *that*, before all other Instances of Christian Duty, as the Reason of his acquitting or condemning us for ever, as we have or have not Conscientiously observ'd it. As you may see at large in the 25. *Matt.* 31st, and following Verses.

And one Reason of his then proceeding in this manner, may be the openly vindicating his Heavenly Father's Honour to the whole Intelligent Creation which shall then be assembled together, from those unjust Imputations which have been cast upon his Providence, by Reason of the extream Poverty of some, while others abound in Plenty, and waste that Plenty in Riot and Excess.

Now no Man being the *Proprietor* but God's *Steward* only of that Portion of Worldly Good, which he hath committed to his Trust and Management ; and those that are Rich being more eminently so, and oblig'd to distribute of their Substance

according

according to the Ability that God hath given them, to those that are in want, that so none of his great Household may be destitute of what is needful for them, according to the Place and Station they are in; and which, if perform'd faithfully, there would be no occasion of Complaint, but every one would have a comfortable Subsistence: But notwithstanding God the great Householder hath put things in this excellent Order, and made this wise Provision for all his Family, a great part of it groaning under great Necessities, and even perishing for Want, through the Baseness of his Stewards who are unfaithful to him, and thereby bring Dishonourable Reflections upon him; therefore, at the great Day of Account, Enquiry shall more strictly and particularly be made into the Discharge of this part of every Man's Stewardship; that so God may be publicly clear'd from all Appearance of Injustice, and a hardned Disregard of any of his Creatures, and the Unfaithfulness of those wicked Stewards of his, expos'd to all the World, and punish'd with the utmost Severity, for with-holding his Bounty from those for whom it was design'd, and thereby bringing so much Misery upon their Fellow-servants, and such vile Aspersions upon their Gracious Lord.

He then that expects to have the Judge his Friend at the terrible Day, when he shall be call'd to give an Account of his Stewardship, must make Friends with him before-hand by Acts of Charity and Pity to the necessitous ; he must consider *the sick and needy*, as the Psalmist expresses it, *Psal. 41. 1.* take their Case into his serious Thoughts, and *contrive* how he may best supply their Wants, and do accordingly. He must not *forget to do good and to communicate*, but gladly shew Mercy to the miserable, for *with such Sacrifices God is well pleas'd*, Heb. 13. 16. and will thereby be inclin'd *to deliver him in the time of Trouble*, and shew him Mercy, then when he wants it most : And be it little or much that we are intrusted with, we must proportion our Charity accordingly. *If we have much, we must give plentifully ; if little, we must do our Diligence gladly to give of that little, for so shall we gather to our selves a good Reward in the Day of Necessity.* For as our Saviour says, v. 10. of this Chapter, *He that is faithful in that which is least, will be faithful also in much, and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much :* And where there is a true Principle of Fidelity, and Charity, whatever the degree of the Man's Ability is, he will do suitably to it.

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If therefore, as he goes on v. 11. ye have not been faithful in the Unrighteous Mammon, or Worldly Wealth, but have abus'd it to ends quite contrary to what your great Lord design'd when he entrusted you with it ; Who will commit to your Trust the true Riches ? How can you expect God should bestow upon you the infinitely more valuable Treasures of Happiness and Glory, which he hath laid up for his faithful Servants in Heaven, and which are for ever secure from all those Dangers and Contingencies to which every thing is liable here, which neither Moth nor Rust doth corrupt, and which Thieves cannot break through and steal ? And if, as he concludes v. 12. ye have not been faithful in that which is another Man's, who shall give you that which is your own ? If that in which you have no Propriety, but is only put into your hands by God, to be dispos'd of to such and such Uses, as he hath been pleas'd to direct, and that for the Benefit of others as well as of your selves; if this hath been embezzled by you, and wickedly made use of to quite different Purposes : how can you think he will ever give you one of those everlasting Mansions, in his Heavenly Kingdom, which by his Divine Favour and Bounty, shall be so firmly settled upon their blest Inhabitants, that they n

truly call them their *own*, and depend upon the undisturb'd Enjoyment of them to all Eternity ?

If therefore, 'twas wisely done of the Unjust Steward in the Parable, to make a Provision for himself with his Lord's Goods committed to him, against the Time when his Stewardship should be taken from him ; 'twill be our Wisdom to imitate his *prudent Foresight* tho' not his *Fraud* and *Injustice* : And by a Faithful Discharge of our Trust, and Improvement of our great Lord's Talents to his Honour and the Good of our Brethren, to *make to our selves Friends with the Mammon*, which is too often abus'd to very *Unrighteous* Purposes ; *that when we fail*, Jesus may look upon us with Favour and Mercy at the last great Audit, and the Blessed Ministers of his Kingdom may *Receive us into those everlasting Habitations*, where those that truly serv'd him here, enjoy perpetual Felicity and Rest.

So shall we be as wise in *our* Generation, as the Children of the World are in *theirs* ; and by approving our selves to be indeed *Children of the Light* and of the Day, and true to our Blessed Principles, and Holy Profession here below, enjoy in God's good time, Eternal Happiness, in the Regions of Glory above.

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The P R A Y E R.

I.

AND Thou, most Blessed Saviour Jesus!
 Who art all Love and Tenderness and
 Bounty, to thy poor miserable Creatures, till
 by the Abuse of thy Goodness, and obstinate
 Rejection of the Methods of thy Mercy,
 they force thee to do Justice; Awaken, I
 most humbly beseech thee, my drowsy stupid
 Soul, that at length I may look up, and be
 so wise as to see, and vigorously pursue the
 things that belong to my Eternal Peace be-
 fore they be hid from my Eyes! O make me
 thoroughly sensible, that to Salvation all
 things else are Trifles, that so I may apply
 my self with the utmost Care and Diligence
 to this one thing needful, and work it out
 with Fear and Trembling!

What hast thou done, and suffer'd, O
 most compassionate Redeemer, for Vile Re-
 bellious me, to rescue my poor sinful Soul
 from Hell! And shall I, like a stupid hard-
 ned Wretch, do nothing for my self! Shall
 I again rush headlong into that Destruction
 from which thou hast redeem'd me with thy
 most precious Blood! Jesu, Defend me from
 such fatal Madness! And teach me more
 and more to prize, and with the utmost Cir-

cumspetion to secure, what thou, the King of Glory didst become a Sacrifice to purchase for me ! O wondrous Love ! O Miracle of Mercy and unfathomable Goodness !

O may it lead me to an immediate, and sincere Repentance ! May I detest those Vices with a perfect Hatred, which brought my Saviour to the Cross ; and would have sunk me into the bottomless Abyss of Misery, had he not been my kind Deliverer ; and will again sink me still deeper in it, if I abuse that Mercy, by a continu'd Course of Sin !

II.

I know, most Gracious Lord, I can't but know, that every thing on Earth is empty and unsatisfying, apt to corrupt my Soul, and make me miserable ; but 'tis thy Service only that can make me happy : O therefore more and more estrange me from the World ! Redeem me from all vain and irreligious Conversation ; and save me from the Power as well as Punishment of all my Sins ! And fix my Thoughts and my Affections so steadily above, that I may disregard the flitting momentary things I meet with here ; and pass through all the Stages of this my Earthly Pilgrimage, with all the Indifference that becomes an Inheritour of thy Eternally Glorious and Blissful Kingdom ! And may I be

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be so wise as to make all the Varieties of this mortal Life subservient to thy Honour and my own Salvation ; and improve, like a faithful Steward, whatever good things thou shalt please to intrust me with, to the gracious ends for which thou dost design them ! So shall I serve thee acceptably here ; And through thy Merits and Mercies, be admitted to share in endless Joys with thee hereafter.

Amen ! Thou most Adorable, and Blessed Saviour Jesus, Amen, Amen !

PARA-

PARABLE XI.

Of the Unprofitable Servant.

Luke xvij. 7, &c.

Which of you having a Servant, plowing or feeding Cattle, will say unto him by and by when he is come from the Field, go and sit down to Meat ?

And will not rather say unto him, make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thy self and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken ; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink ?

Doth he thank that Servant because he did the things that were commanded him ? I trow not.

So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable Servants : We have done that which was our duty to do.

THE Occasion of our Lord's speaking this Parable to his *Apostles*, I suppose to be this. In the first Verse of this Chapter, he tells them how *impossible it is but that Offences will come* ; that some way

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or other, Men will be injurious to one another, and too often in the greatest Concern of all, that of Religion: By ill Example or ill Doctrine, doing what may be very mischievous to each others Souls, and hindring the Progress of the Gospel, at least in its true Life and Energy, among those especially that are *weak* and *unstable*, not well fix'd and settled in the Faith of Christ; and so, easily led away from the Truth, into destructive Errors and Delusions. *But wo unto him*, says Christ, *by whom they come; it were better for him that a Milstone were hang'd about his Neck, and he cast into the Sea, than that he should offend*, v. 2. or harm and mischief, and put a Stumbling-block in the way of *one of these little ones*. Whereby he gave his Apostles sufficient Caution to avoid every thing of that Nature in the Discharge of their Ministry; and to treat every one, particularly the wavering, and ignorant, and ill grounded, with all the Tenderneſs that was consistent with the Safety of their Souls, (for there is a Tenderneſs that is very ruinous and destructive) as St. Paul says he did, when he *became all things to all Men, that by all means he might save some*, 1 Cor. 9. 20, &c.

And as for any injurious ill Treatment they might meet with themselves; he warns them

them to beware of Malice and Implacability and Revenge, Ver. 3. *Take heed to your selves*, says he, *if thy Brother trespass against thee, rebuke him*, in the Spirit of Meekness, to make him sensible of his Fault; and then, *if he repent and is sorry for it, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a Day, and seven times a Day turn again to thee, saying I repent, thou shalt forgive him*, v. 4. Thy Charity shall not be tired out, tho' with many and often repeated Provocations, especially if the Man returns to a better Mind; according to what he had taught them to beg of God in their daily Prayers, *Forgive us our Trespases as we forgive them that trespass against us.*

But this was so contrary to the corrupt Tendencies of Flesh and Blood, and seem'd a Doctrine so very difficult to be practis'd, that the Apostles distrusted their own Ability in this matter, and said to their great Master, *Lord increase our Faith!* v. 5. "So
" strengthen our Confidence in thy mighty
" Aid and Assistance; that it may incline
" thee to enable us, effectually to perform
" all thou requirest of us!

To this good Prayer of theirs our Lord answers, as by way of Approbation of it, and to assure 'em that such a firm Faith was indeed all in all; *If ye had Faith as*

a Grain of Mustard seed, ye might say to this Sycamine Tree, be thou pluck'd up by the Root, and be thou planted in the Sea, and it should obey you, v. 6. For as he said upon another occasion, *all things are possible to him that believeth*, Mark 9. 23. and he that stedfastly relies upon God's Aid, in the Performance of what he has made his Duty, and does his own best endeavour towards it; and confidently expects the Completion of any of his gracious Promises, tho' seemingly never so hard to be made good, shall find God faithful and true. Nothing shall be too difficult for him in *Morality* and *Christian Virtue*; nor in *Nature*, when God sets him about it, and has promis'd to carry him through. And this the Event shew'd to be true as to the *Apostles*, in both respects, to the Wonder of the World.

But lest this should make them hereafter apt to arrogate too much to themselves, our Lord subjoins the above recited Parable. *But which of you having a Servant plowing or feeding Cattle*, that is, not a Servant hired for so much Wages, and for such a Time, to do such and such Work; but a Servant, or *Slave*, bought with his Money, or taken in War, who was intirely at his Master's Disposal, and whose Maintenance, and the Preservation of his
Life

Life was a sufficient Recompense for the best Service he could do : Which of you having such a Servant that has been all Day employ'd in the Field, *will say unto him by and by, or presently, as soon as he is come home, go and sit down to Meat ? And will not rather employ him in his Domestick Affairs, when he had finish'd those abroad, and say unto him, make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thy self, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken, and afterward thou shalt eat and drink ? Doth he thank that servant ? Is he oblig'd to him for all this, because he did those things that were commanded him, and it may be quietly and diligently too ? I trow not ; because his Life and his Livelihood being owing to his Master, he is paid before hand, for all that he can do for him. So likewise ye, says Christ (applying what he had said to his Apostles,) When ye shall have done all those great things that are commanded you, don't be exalted by it in your own Conceits, and think you merit great Matters at my hands ; but rather humbly say, (and which is no more than the very Truth) *We are unprofitable servants, still indebted to God, not he at all to us ; for we have done that which antecedently, upon innumerable Accounts was but our Duty to do.**

So

So that this Parable, 'tis plain, was design'd to cut off all pretence to *Merit*, even in the *Apostles* themselves ; and that though they should entirely perform their Duty, how great and difficult soever it might be. And no doubt, but it was likewise intended for the Instruction of all Ages and Persons in the Christian Church ; and is as effectual now, as it was then, to convince every one of us of our no Desert, even after the Performance of our sincerest Duty : And that as the good Patriarch said, *We are not worthy of the least of all the Mercies, and of all the Truth, which God hath shew'd to his unprofitable Servants*, Gen. 32. 10.

In discoursing therefore upon this Parable, I shall endeavour to shew how utterly without Reason, and highly arrogant it is, for even the best Man living upon any Account whatever, to pretend to *merit any thing* at the Hands of God, much less *Eternal Salvation* ; and then conclude with some proper Inferences from the whole.

As for the great Unreasonableness and Arrogance, of any Man's pretending to *merit any thing* at the hands of God, be the Man never so excellent and good, one would think it should be granted at first hearing by every one that knows what God, and what Man is : and to attempt
seriously

seriously to prove it, seems a great Reproach to Humane Nature, as if it were extremely ignorant, or intolerably proud. And indeed, the wiser and the better any Man is, the more intimately sensible must he needs be of this great Truth, and need no Arguments to convince him of it.

But there being a great Body of Men, and who assume to themselves the Venerable Character of the only true Catholick Church of Christ, and pretend to be infallible too, who maintain the contrary Doctrine; and tell us that our good Works are *Meritorious*, and that for *others* as well as for our *selves*, for the *Dead* as well as the *Living*: (and *Infallibility*, and *Merit*, are Doctrines that may well go together, and shew what manner of Spirit those are of who hold them) for this Reason, 'tis but needful to preserve our selves from the Infection of so poysonous an Opinion, (and which our corrupt Nature is but too apt to suck in) by such Considerations as may be a proper Antidote against it.

I. And first, Let us consider that we are God's *Creatures*, that he gave us a *Being* when we were *not*; and that our Continuance in being, and the Possession and Use of any of our Powers and Faculties, wholly depends upon his good Pleasure and Support: Which if he should with-
draw,

draw, tho' but for one Moment, we should fall into our Primitive *Nothing*. This, I suppose, no Christian will deny ; and if this be true, what room is there for *Merit* in this first Step ? What possible Pretence can there be of *his* deserving any thing, who t'other Day was *Nothing* ; from *him* who out of that nothing, made him *what he is* ? Suppose our Endowments, whether of Body or Mind to be never so excellent, and even to equal our own highest Conceits of them ; and suppose we employ'd 'em all to God's Honour, and in promoting the Interests of his Kingdom ; suppose we spent our whole Lives in his Service, and lost 'em for his sake : What Plea could we have for *Merit*, even when we had done all this ?

For what had we, that we did not first receive from *him* ? And what can a poor dependent Creature either do or suffer for his infinitely good Creator ; which his deriving his very Being from him, and all the Comforts he ever enjoy'd all his Days, doth not bind him to in strict Duty, and for the Neglect of which he would deserve the severest Punishment ? And the Nobler, and more Excellent, our Being and Endowments are, the greater Obligation lies upon us to that Divine and Munificent Being, who gave us all we are, and have,

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and rais'd us to this *Height* out of *No-thing*; and upon whose Bounty and Support we intirely depend for all our future Hopes.

Now, How is it possible for such a vast Debt as this to be ever *over-paid*? And *over-paid* it must be, before we can pretend to *merit* any thing of him. For could we be suppos'd to have fully paid the Debt, even to the utmost Farthing, (which is a Supposition so wild, so extravagant, so impossible that it confounds our Thoughts to suppose it) *that* would only take off the Obligation which *we* before lay under to God; and some *new* thing must be done to lay any Obligation upon God to *us*: And from the Blasphemy of thinking *that* to be ever possible, good Lord deliver us!

But Secondly, We should consider, that we are not only God's *Creatures*, but vile, ungrateful *sinful* *Creatures* too; obstinately persisting in our Iniquities, notwithstanding all the wonderful Methods his infinite Goodness hath taken to reclaim *us*: Which removes us still further from all Possibility of *Merit*.

A stubborn sinful Creature, (and such we are all, more or less) is the very worst of Characters, and includes every thing that is apt to provoke God to Anger and fierce Indignation, and make him hate and de-

test

test us ; but is the furthest thing in Nature from *deserving* any thing of him that is Good.

Rebellion against the Author of our Being and of all our Comforts ; spurning at the Authority of him by whom Kings reign ; setting up our own Wills in Opposition to his, and taking part with the Devil against him ; abusing the excellent Gifts, and innumerable Blessings he hath bestow'd upon us to his great Dishonour ; disregarding, nay, violently breaking his holy, just and good Commands ; despising his Rewards and precious Promises, contemning his Threatnings and Punishments, impudently flying in the Face even of Omnipotence it self, and daring him to do his worst ; turning his Grace and merciful Forbearance into Lasciviousness, and an Encouragement still to go on in our ungrateful and unnatural Rebellion : All this, and infinitely more, is included in the Notion of a stubborn sinful Creature.

And now, I would fain know, what such a wretched Miscreant as this, can pretend to *merit* at the hands of his so vilely abused, and so justly offended Maker ? Does not such base Ingratitude and intolerable Provocations of the Divine Majesty, deserve an Eternal Curse, rather than the very least Blessing ? It does, it does ; and

we must all of us with Shame and Confusion of Face confess it ; and O that we would so sincerely judge and condemn our selves for it, as to prevent our being condemn'd by thee, our Righteous Lord !

But tho' as *Creatures*, and *Sinners*, we can't pretend to *merit* ; yet may we not as *Christians* ? As those whom Jesus, the Eternal and Well-beloved Son of God, hath redeemed from all Iniquity with his most precious Blood, and purchas'd to himself as his peculiar People, and who are influenc'd by his Blessed Spirit, and so nearly united to him ? Will not all this make us capable of doing something that may be *meritorious*, and deserve God's Favour, and a suitable Reward ? All this will indeed intitle us to a Share in the Merits of our *Blessed Saviour*, if we perform what is required on our part ; but as for making room for any Merit of our *own*, 'tis so far from it, that it utterly excludes it, both as *needless* and *impossible*. As *needless*, because our Redeemer's Merits are *All-sufficient* to purchase Salvation for Myriads of sinful Worlds, and he hath already obtain'd Eternal Redemption for us ; and likewise as *impossible*, because this wondrous Goodness of God to us, has made us more deeply indebted to him than ever : And if 'tis impossible for us ever to pay what we

owe

owe him for the Benefits he confer'd on us in our *Creation* alone ; his rescuing us afterwards from Eternal Misery, by the Death of his Divine Son, even then when we were in actual Rebellion against him. This adds such infinite Sums to the Account, as must make it more impossible than ever to discharge our *just Debts* to our most merciful God, much more to do any thing that may lay the least Obligation upon *him* to *us*. And as for our being ransomed by Christ from the Devil's miserable Captivity, and bought by him with a most inestimable Price to be his Servants for ever ; tho' this indeed is our great Honour and Happiness (and for ever Blessed be the infinite Compassions of our dear Redeemer !) yet so far is it from putting us into a Capacity of meriting any thing of him, much less Eternal Salvation, tho' we serve him with never so much Faithfulness and Diligence ; That 'tis directly the Case in the Parable we are discoursing of : And after we have done all, we must confess that 'tis by no means *meritorious*, but that we are *Unprofitable Servants*, having done no more, than upon the highest Obligations, *was our Duty to do*. According to that of the Apostle, 1 Cor. 6. 19, 20. *Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a Price ; therefore glorify God in your Body, and in your Spirit, which are God's.* B b 3 III.

III. Farther yet, there is another Consideration which will likewise effectually cut off all Pretence to Merit, for the future; and that is our *Unthankfulness*, and ungrateful Forgetfulness of what we have already receiv'd of God's undeserved Bounty and Goodness.

One would think that Creatures in our Circumstances, who enjoy so much, and deserve nothing; who are indeed Vessels of Wrath, and by our Numberless Iniquities fitted for Destruction, and yet are forborn, and repriev'd from time to time, and assur'd, upon our sincere Repentance, of Pardon, nay of Heaven, through the Merits and Mediation of our Blessed Lord: One would think, Creatures in such Circumstances as these should be so *over-joy'd* (if that Expression may be us'd in this Case) at such inestimable Mercies as these, as that nothing but Praises and Halleluja's should come out of our Mouths as the Overflowings of the inward Joy of our glad Hearts, and all our Conversation be humbly chearful, easy and serene.

This one might reasonably expect indeed; but do we find it so? Is not Murmuring and Repining, Envy and Discontent, rather to be met with almost every where? And instead of grateful Acknowledgments of our infinite Obligations to
God,

God, who hath loaden us with Benefits so far beyond our Desert; don't we grumble at our Portion, and proudly think that we deserve much more than we have?

Now he, that altho' he deserves not the *least* Expression of God's Goodness to him, is yet ungratefully unmindful of the *greatest*; becomes, by such vile Carriage still more undeserving than ever: Still further and further remov'd from all Possibility of *Merit*, which nothing can set a Man at greater Distance from than base Ingratitude. An humble and thankful Recognition of past Mercies, is the best way to incline God to bestow upon us still more; and 'twas not *Merit*, but the *want of Merit*, that was good *Jacob's* Plea, when he begg'd God's Favour and Protection. He confesseth himself *unworthy of the least of the Mercies* which he had formerly received of him; *Gen. 32. 10.* and therefore begs the Continuance of his Goodness to him. Well knowing that of our selves we have nothing to recommend us, but our Miseries and Wants; and therefore, that the deepest Humility and great Thankfulness for every thing, best becomes such a wretched Condition as ours.

These Considerations, tho' so plain and obvious, are yet sufficient, without entring further into the Depths of Dispute, to

preserve us from the Infection of the pernicious Doctrines of *Merit*, and Works of Supererogation, which the Church of *Rome* is so fond of, for the sake of the Worldly Gain, and Advantage she has by them : They being the great Foundation of Indulgencies for the living Sinner, and Masses for the dead, which bring in so much Treasure to her, and are the Support of her outward Pomp and Splendor.

But blessed be God, *We have not so learn'd Christ* ; and our Holy Primitive Mother, the Church of *England*, whatever false Imputations of being Popishly affected some may throw upon her, utterly abhors what is Popery indeed ; and openly declares against it, and is at a greater Distance from it, than those who so maliciously, and without ground, asperse her. And as to the particular Doctrines we have been now discoursing of, she utterly disowns any *Merit* in our *own* good Works, and reposes all her Trust in the Merits of *Christ Jesus* only for Salvation ; as may be seen in her 11th Article : and in her 14th censures the Doctrine of Works of *Supererogation*, in and for others, as arrogant and impious, and directly contrary to our Lord's Words in the Close of this Parable, *When ye have done all those things that are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable Servants.* I shall

I shall now infer some few things from what hath been discours'd, that may influence our Practice.

I. And First, from the Consideration of our being at first *nothing*, and therefore having nothing *now*, that we can call our own but our Sins; and being liable to be reduc'd to nothing again, if our great Creator shall please, tho' but one Moment, to withdraw his Conservation and Support : From hence we may see what little Reason even the best and most excellent Man living hath to be *proud*, and how much better the deepest Humility would become him.

For shall a poor dependent Creature, that t'other Day was *nothing*, that now draws in precarious Breath, which in a Moment may be taken from him, and whose Excellencies, whatever they may be, are only *lent* him, not his own ; shall such a Wretch as this be *proud* ?

What shall he be proud of ? His excellent Nature, as being made after the Image of God ? 'Tis true, 'tis an excellent Nature ; but then, who made it so ? Didst thou give being to thy self ? That is a palpable Contradiction ; but if thou didst receive it from some other, *Glory not as if thou didst not receive it, but remember who made thee to differ from the more inferiour Parts*
of

of the Creation, and let *his* be all the Praise and Glory for ever.

Instead then, of priding our selves in our excellent Endowments, let us be curious to search out our *Spots*, and our *Defilements*; and those indeed, are so many and so great, that without any curious search they are soon visible. But how came those Defilements upon such excellent Natures, which were made after the Image of an infinitely pure and perfect God? Most certainly they came clean out of the hands of their Divine Maker, not the least Flaw or Blemish did then adhere to them, for he himself approv'd of this part of the Work of his Hands as well as of the rest, and pronounc'd it *very good*.

Whence then, these Spots, these Filthinesses which now o'erspread our Natures, and render us so vile in the sight of our good God, and his Holy Angels, and when our Eyes are open in our *own* Sight too? Whence are they, but from our own base Lusts, and ungovernable Affections! *God made Man upright*, says the Wise, Royal Preacher, *Eccl. 7. 29. but he hath sought out many Inventions*; and those of such a Nature as tend to degrade him from a Man to a Brute, and deface the Image of God upon his Soul, and in its room impress that of the Prince of Darkness.

This

This is our *own* Act and Deed, and all the Deformities consequent upon it, we may challenge as our *own*. But is this a thing to be *proud* of? Will we glory in this our Shame?

If nothing be our own then, but such Vileness as this is (and this in very Truth is all that we can lay claim to as our own Propriety) *Pride* certainly *was not made for Man*, but rather the greatest possible degrees of Humility and Self-Annihilation, as being originally *nothing*, and since, by our own Fault, all cover'd over with various Pollutions. Whatever is good and excellent in us, is intirely deriv'd from *God*, and therefore to him should all the Praise be ascrib'd; but our *own* are the Blemishes and Defilements that are upon us, the Result of our great and manifold Iniquities; and therefore to our selves belongs nothing but Shame and Confusion of Face.

II. Secondly, From what has been said against all Pretence to *Merit*, and that we are utterly unworthy of the least of those innumerable Blessings which *God's* free Bounty hath bestowed upon us; from hence I infer the Vileness and Unreasonableness of *Envy*.

And this Inference may well follow the former, because there is always *Pride* at the

the bottom of Envy ; and if *that* be destroyed *this* must fall together with it. For why does any Man pine away at the sight of another's greater Prosperity, but because he thinks he deserves at least as *well* as that other ; and therefore can't bear to see him more flourishing than himself ?

And accordingly 'tis observable, that our *Equals* are for the most part the Objects of our *Envy*, or those that are not very much above us. Thus one Prince envies another, and one Beggar too another ; (for Envy is no Stranger even to the meanest Cottages) but we shall seldom meet with a Beggar that really *envies* a Prince : He may *admire* him, and his splendid Retinue and Equipage, and the like ; but there is too great a Distance between these two Conditions, to admit of that which is properly *Envy* ; and the like may be said in any other Instance where there is any great Inequality. But when Mens Circumstances and Condition come nearer together, then 'tis that Envy reigns ; and because a Man thinks himself in his Birth perhaps, and natural Endowments, or upon any other Account as good and deserving as another, who hath much better Fortune in the World than he ; therefore this Fury gnaws upon his Liver, and consumes him into a *Skeleton*.

Envy

Envy therefore, manifestly proceeding from *Pride*, and high Thoughts, and a great Esteem of our selves, and our own Deservings : Could I thoroughly convince any Man, that the very least of the good things he enjoys, is much more than he can pretend to *deserve* ; no fear of his being envious at others, that enjoy more and greater than he does. 'Tis an over-valuing our own Deserts, and an under-valuing God's present Mercies to us, that produceth *Envy* : but how vile and unreasonable he is, who values that very highly which deserves nothing at all, and looks upon that as nothing which deserves to be highly esteem'd ; I may leave even to the envious Man himself to judge.

Wherefore for the future, let us learn to look upon the least Blessing God is pleas'd to bestow upon us as far beyond our *Desert*, (which is no more than the real Truth) and then we shall find very little Temptation to envy others greater Prosperity : For with what Face can I repine, because another has more than I have ; when at the same time I am sensible, that I have much more than I can any ways pretend to merit, or be worthy of, already ?

III. *Thirdly*, From what has been said of our great Unworthiness and no Desert, we may see how great the Sin is of Murmuring

muring and Discontent (whether we *envy* any Body else or not, tho' they generally go together) and what great Reason every one of us have, be our Circumstances never so mean, to be easy and satisfy'd with our present Lot. There is no Man that has Health and Food enough, tho' never so plain, to support his Life, and sufficient clothing, tho' never so coarse, to keep him from the Injuries of the Weather; but must confess that even *this* is more than he can pretend to deserve. For he is not only a Creature, which was but lately *nothing*; but he is a vile Ungrateful *Sinner* too, and a Rebel to his great and good Creator, and if he deserves any thing it must be ruine. Since therefore God's Mercy reprieves him from that Ruine, nay designs through the Merits and Mediation of his Blessed Son, at length to make him for ever happy in Heaven, and that upon most reasonable Terms; and in the mean time gives him *here* more and greater Blessings than he is worthy of upon any account whatever: What Reason has he to be discontented, even with the meanest Condition of Life? He would be basely ungrateful if he should, and a thankful Chearfulness is no more than his Duty.

But how few of us are in such low Circumstances as those we mention'd but now?

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now ? How plentifully do most of us enjoy the Comforts as well as Necessaries of Life ; and may say with the Psalmist, *thou hast cast my Lot in a fair Ground, yea I have a goodly Heritage, thou daily heapest thy Benefits upon me, I have Bread to the full, and my Cup runneth over !* What abundant Reason have we therefore, to be easy and chearful and satisfy'd, who tho' unworthy as we are of the least of all the Mercies which God hath bestow'd upon us ; have yet enjoy'd so many and so great ones from our Youth up even till now, and have a comfortable Prospect of the Years to come !

Perhaps we may have met with some Crosses and Disappointments, and have known some Sorrow ; but for the most part this is the effect of our own Folly, and always is no more than the due Desert of our Sins ; and yet we are apt presently with equal Impiety and Ingratitude to fret against our good God, to quarrel with his Providence, and over-look the many and great Blessings we already have, because in every thing we can't have our vain Desires gratify'd. But how ill does this become us ! How strangely do we forget our selves, and the undeserv'd Benefits of our Gracious Creator !

Thus *Jesurun grows fat and kicks ; thus we*

we become wanton with the large Bounty of Heaven, and then brutishly spurn at our Divine Benefactor. We surfeit of too much Plenty, and grow weary of, and loath, what many a poor Wretch as good, and it may be better than our selves, would think himself very happy if he could enjoy. For shame let this great and most provoking Fault be for the future amended; and if Shame will not, let *Fear* teach us the great Wisdom of Contentment; lest God deprive us of those Blessings which we so slight and undervalue, and keep his hand shut to us for the time to come.

IV. Lastly, From what hath been said of God's great Goodness to *us*, his *undeserving Creatures* and *unprofitable Servants*, we may see how much *Thanksgiving* is our Duty; and what strong Obligations lie upon us *to have his Praises ever in our Mouths*. An easy cheap return this, and yet very acceptable to the Father of Mercies, if it proceeds from a sincerely grateful Spirit. And what can be a greater Motive to it than this, that such Wretches as we, should receive such infinite Favours, who have deserv'd nothing but the Flames of Hell! O that our Hearts were duly touch'd with a Sense of our own Vileness and Unworthiness, that so we might worthily magnify God's infinite Goodness!

What

What can look worse, than to see an unworthy Sinner surrounded with Blessings Spiritual and Temporal, numerous and great, and he all the while *insensible* of them ; or at most, bring out at some set Times a few cold, customary, general Acknowledgments ! God forbid it should be so with any of us any longer, whatever it has been hitherto ! And to the end we may be more deeply affected with the wondrous Kindness of our Heavenly Benefactor, it is very adviseable, that we would often set our selves in our Retirements, to look back to the earliest Days we can remember, and muster up as well as we can, God's particular Mercies to us, and place them in order before our Minds, and heedfully consider the Number and the Value of them.

Thus, (to give some Hints whereby we may the better direct our Meditations upon this Blessed Subject) how great was God's Care over every one of us at our first *Entrance* into this World, preserving us from those many sad Accidents, which a poor Babe is then in danger of, and which should they befall it, would render its whole Life after miserable ! And how great was his good Providence towards us in the helpless State of Infancy, and busy thoughtless Childhood ; how often have

we been strangely preserv'd from sad Mis-
chances in those our tender Years ; any
of which would have put an end to our
short Life, had not our Heavenly Father
*given his Angels charge over us to keep us in
all our ways !*

We may further consider, how happy
'twas for us, that we were born in a Chri-
stian Country, and early dedicated to God
in Baptism ; *wherein we were made Mem-
bers of Christ, Children of God, and Inheri-
tors of the Kingdom of Heaven ;* that we
had good and indulgent Parents, who
gave us a pious and ingenuous Education,
and brought us up in the Fear and Service
of God ; that we have all along enjoy'd
the free use of our Senses and our Reason,
and some of us an uninterrupted State of
Health (the greatest Blessing in this World)
for many Years together ; that we have
had the great Advantage of good Com-
pany, and Excellent Example, and *most*
of us a *comfortable* Maintenance, and *many*
of us a very *Liberal* one ; whereby our
Minds have been freed from anxious Care
and Solitude about to Morrow's Support
(or at least, had no need to cark and pinch
whatever our Covetousness may have
prompted us to do) and our Thoughts
at Leisure for a vigorous pursuit of our
great End !

And

And how hath God prosper'd us in the main Strokes of our Lives; in our Callings, our Estates, our Marriages, our Issue; and (as I believe many of us may say) in every thing of Moment that we have set our Hands unto!

What Friends hath he unexpectedly rais'd up to us, to counsel and advise, to aid and assist, to support and comfort us; to make light our Burthens, by bearing part of our Troubles, and add to our Enjoyments by their endearing Conversation! What great Helps have we enjoy'd in the Prosecution of our main Interest, the Salvation of our Souls! How many excellent Books have we met with to enliven our dying Religion, and re-enkindle the Flames of a sincere Piety in our Breasts! How affectionately and impartially have the Guides of our Souls laid before us the whole of our Religion in its Native Beauty and Lustre; and stirred us up with the most prevalent Arguments to walk worthy of it in all Holy Conversation and Godliness!

Does not one Day tell another, and one Night certify another, that the Mercies of our God never fail, but are new every Morning? Where shall I make an end even of these general Hints of the wondrous Goodness of God? There is no

End, nor Bottom, 'tis a boundless and unfathomable Ocean.

But though the Blessed and Delightful *Theme* be endless, our Discourse of it must not be so too ; and therefore let us sum up all in that amazing Expression of the Divine Love, the Redemption of the World, from the Eternal Miseries of Hell, by the Death and Passion of the Son of God. Who became a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief, that he might be an Attonement and Propitiation for our Sins, and bore our Punishment, that through his Stripes we might be heal'd, and our sinful Souls cleans'd by his Precious Blood. What words can express the Value of *this* Mercy ! What Adoration and Praise can be sufficient for such unparallel'd Love as this ! O Blessed God, *as is thy Majesty, so is thy Mercy*, both infinite and inexpressible !

And now, Let's breath a while ; and being I hope, by this faint Glimpse of the Glory of the Divine Goodness to us, become sensible in some measure of the infinite Obligations he has laid upon us, let us cast an Eye upon *our selves* ; and see whether or no we *deserve* any of the least of these his Mercies. And if we don't, as certainly we don't, and as we have prov'd sufficiently before ; then let us ask our
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selves this Question, What Return ought I to make for such, and so many undeserved Favours and Blessings, as I have for many Years receiv'd, and do daily still receive, at the Hands of my good God? And I can't but believe the Result will be, that we shall feel our Souls full of Love and Thankfulness; of Joy, and Admiration and Praise; of humble Acknowledgments, that as good *Jacob* said, we are *less than the least of all the Mercies and the Truth which God hath shewn to his unworthy and unprofitable Servants*; and of firm Resolutions of intire Obedience to his Blessed Will, who is our greatest Friend and Benefactor.

And indeed this last, is the most acceptable Return of all; and in making which we should employ our utmost and sincerest Endeavours. And they that thus praise him for his Mercies here, shall at length bear a part in the blessed Choir of Saints, and Angels, and beatify'd Spirits in the Kingdom of Glory: Chaunting out the Praises of the great Father of Mercies, of Jesus his beloved Son, the blessed Redeemer of the World, and of the Divine Spirit of them both, our Comforter and Guide, to all Eternity. Wherefore let us conclude in the words of the *Psalmist*, 71. *Pf. 13, 14. My Mouth shall daily speak of thy Right-*

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teousness and Salvation, for I know no end
thereof; I will go forth in the Strength of
the Lord God, and will make mention of
thy Righteousness only.

The P R A Y E R.

AN D thou, O Father of Mercies, and
God of all Comforts, the Eternal
Fountain of Life and Blessing, in whom I
live and move, and have my Being, and
who hast given me richly all things to enjoy
that are needful to my Happiness both in
this World, and one infinitely better; I
praise and magnify, with all my Soul, thy
wondrous and disinterested Goodness, to one
who is so extremely unworthy, and less than
the least of thy Mercies.

My Goodness, O Lord, extendeth not to
thee, nor can it be in the least to thy Ad-
vantage, should I be able to make my way
perfect; and could I perform all that thou
hast commanded, (which yet alas, how far
am I from doing!) I must confess I have
but done my Duty, for which thou hast re-
warded me before-hand, with Blessings
greater than my Eternal Service, could ever
make a suitable Return for.

O therefore, Gracious Lord, preserve me,
I beseech thee, from trusting in my own
imperfect

imperfect Righteousness ; and from all other vain Dependancies, and ill grounded Hopes, in a matter of such infinite Consequence as my Salvation ! And may thy boundless Mercies, O my God, and thy prevailing and all-sufficient Merits, blessed Redeemer, be my only Confidence, my Comfort and Support ; through all my Life, and in the Hour of Death, and at the Day of Judgment !

Thou Lord, hast out of nothing made me what I am, through thee have I been holden up ever since I was born, and thou hast been my Trust from my Youth : O may I never be unmindful of my low Original, and of thy constant Favours to me ; but let my Mouth be filled with thy Praise, that I may speak of thy Glory and Honour all the Day, and in all Lowliness and Humbleness of Mind, think meanly of my self ! So shall I escape being split upon the Rocks of Arrogance and Pride, and safely arrive at the Haven where I would be, through the Satisfaction of thy dearly beloved Son, Jesus the Righteous, my ever Blessed Lord and Saviour. Amen, Amen !

PARABLE XII.

Of the Wise, and Foolish Builder.

Matt. vij. 24, &c.

Therefore, whosoever heareth these Sayings of mine, and doth them, I will liken him unto a wise Man which built his House upon a Rock ;

And the Rain descended, and the Floods came, and the Winds blew, and beat upon that House, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a Rock.

And every one that heareth these Sayings of mine and doth them not, shall be likened unto a Foolish Man that built his House upon the Sand ; and the Rain descended, and the Floods came, and the Winds blew, and beat upon that House, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.

TH^O this is not stiled a *Parable*, and was spoken some time before our Lord's professedly taking up that Mystical way of discoursing to his Hearers in the 13th of *Matthew*, yet I think I need not

not scruple the considering it as such, and the occasion of it was this.

The Holy Jesus, after he had been baptiz'd by *John* in *Jordan*, and declar'd to be the *Messias* by the opening of the Heavens, and a visible Descent of the Spirit of God upon him, and a Voice from Heaven, saying, *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased* ; Mat. 3. 16, 17. After his Triumph over the Devil in the Wilderness, as an earnest of his compleat Conquest of him which was e'er long to follow ; and his forty Days Preparation for the vast Work he was to set about, (*the Reformation of the whole World*) by Prayer, and Fasting, and Contemplation, and recess from secular Disturbances ; Mat. 4. 1, &c. After he had chosen some Followers to minister to him, and prosecute this great Affair, ver. 18. when he should be remov'd from hence by the Malice of wicked Men, and made a Sacrifice for Sinners ; and after making way for his better Reception by miraculously healing *all manner of Sickness, and all manner of Disease among the People*, ver. 23. He went up into a Mountain to instruct his Disciples in the Heavenly Doctrine he came to teach the World, and which they after him were to preach to all Nations ; as that Will of God, which all, to whose

Notice

Notice it should come, should thenceforward be oblig'd to observe and do, upon Pain of his highest Displeasure.

Indeed, the Promulgation of this Law of Christ was not attended like that of *Moses*, *Exod.* 19. — 18. with Thundrings and Lightnings, thick Clouds and Darkness, with Fire, and Smoke, and the Ecchings of loud Trumpets, and Threatnings of Death to Man and Beast who should but touch the Mountain, which it self *quaked greatly*; such Terrors as these might become the Law of Ceremonies, and Ordinances, and that *killing Letter*, but not the gentle Service, and *easy Yoke* of the Lamb of God. Here was only the *small still Voice*; and yet the *Lord* was here in a more August and Glorious Manner, than in *the strong Wind, the Earthquake, or the Fire*, 1 Kings 19. 11, 12.

For *here*, nothing was requir'd to be done, but what is perfectly reasonable in its own Nature, and will advance Mankind to a near Resemblance of God himself; and is so directly conducive to our Happiness in all respects, that the hearty Practice of it will cause unspeakable Satisfaction and Delight, and the highest rais'd Pleasure that the Soul is capable of on this side Heaven. The Man's Condition will be all over *Beatitude*; happy will

will he be at present in himself, and a Happiness to all about him ; happy in his Divine Expectations and Hopes, whilst here below, and beyond Expression happy, when he shall be admitted into his Master's Joy above.

So that here we have a secure Retreat from this unsatisfying, wicked, miserable World ; and to *withdraw* more and more, and *expect* less and less from it, and busy our selves in studying, and practising, these admirable Lessons of our most Holy Religion ; we shall find, when all's done, to be the only blessed and happy State upon Earth, and the sure way that will lead us to the Regions of Glory.

And as this will be our infinitely *best* Employment, so will it be a *full* Employment too ; and whoever makes it his business in Sincerity to conform his Temper, and his Life, to these Heavenly Rules, will find himself neither at Leisure, nor at all desirous if he were, to trifle away his Time in that vain manner, which is but too too much the Custom of the World.

But lest we should think, that although these Directions are indeed most excellent, yet 'tis but few that can attain to such extraordinary Heights of Religion ; and therefore they are to be look'd upon only

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as *Counsels of Perfection*, and a Man's *Eternal Condition*, tho' it will not be so *Glorious* indeed, yet may be *safe* without them; and so take but little notice of what is so much above our Reach: Our great and good Master, to set us right in a matter of such mighty Importance, and prevent a Mistake which would be of most dreadful Consequence, has plainly told us, *not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven*, Matth. 7. 21. even that Will of his which he had just before made known unto his Hearers. And then, he assures us, v. 22, 23. that whatever high Thoughts we may have of our selves and our Performances, and whatever Boasts we may make of the strength of our Faith, in any *other* Respects; yet if *sincere Holiness* be wanting, according to these Rules he hath given us, every thing else will signify nothing: And at the Day of final Recompence he will *profess unto us*, after all our fair Pretences of being his Disciples and Followers, *I never knew you, Depart from me ye that work Iniquity*. And at the close of all, to give this great Truth a deeper Impression upon our Minds, he resembles those *that hear those Sayings of his and do them, to a wise Man*

Man that built his House upon a Rock ; which, though the Rain descended, and the Floods came, and the Winds blew, and beat upon it, yet fell not, because it was founded upon a Rock. But on the contrary, those who hear but do them not, he likeneth to a foolish Man, which built his House upon the Sand ; and when the Rain descended, and the Floods came, and the Winds blew, and beat upon it, it fell, and great was the fall of it.

From all which it is undeniably evident, that our Lord design'd those admirable Lessons he hath taught in his Sermon on the Mount, which he concludes with this Parable, not as *Counsels of Perfection* only, to his *Apostles*, and some few of extraordinary Abilities ; but as the *standing Rule* of every Christian's Practice : And that upon our acting agreeably to it in Sincerity to the best of our Power, depends our Eternal Happiness. And consequently, what is contain'd in it, however difficult it may seem to our corrupted Nature, is yet *practicable* by every sincere Christian ; for otherwise, our Blessed Saviour would not have made it a *necessary Duty*, and that to *all* without Exception, as we see he hath, and upon pain of the severest Punishments if not perform'd. And therefore, *be only that is so wise as*
to

to put in Practice what he hears and knows of the Duties of Christianity, has any good ground to hope for the Rewards of it ; and 'tis as vain and foolish a thing to hope to be sav'd without Christian Obedience ; as for a Man to expect any durable Shelter and Defence against the Injuries of Wind and Weather, from a House that he hath built without any Foundation, upon the treacherous Sand : Which instead of being a Comfort and Security to him, will fall when it should do him most Service, and become his Ruine.

Having thus seen the Meaning and Design of this Parable, or Similitude, call it which you please, we will now consider the several parts of it.

I. The first of which shews us the great *Wisdom* and *happy Consequence* of reducing to practice the Sermons of the Gospel ; and not thinking it sufficient to be instructed in our Christian Duty, and to talk of it, and admire its Excellency, and pretend to much of Faith and Love to Jesus ; unless we heartily set about the Performance of what he requires of us in order to our Salvation. *Whosoever*, says our Lord, *heareth these Sayings of mine and doeth them ; I will liken him to a wise Man which built his House upon a Rock ;*
and

and by laying so firm a Foundation (and which was no more than the Nature and Use of a Building requir'd) secur'd the Superstructure from yielding to those Storms of Wind and Rain, and the Violence of Floods, which a prudent Man that looks before him, can't but know will sometimes happen; and accordingly, when *the Rain descended, and the Floods came, and the Winds blew, and beat upon that House, yet it fell not, because it was founded upon a Rock.*

And of this Nature is the Wisdom of not hearing only but practising the Duties of Christianity. It shews, that we are duly sensible of the *Nature* of those Duties, and the reason why they are commanded, and the indispensable Necessity of our paying Obedience to them, in order to our Happiness; and the stead they will stand us in hereafter, at the great Day of Tryal. It shews that we wisely consider that they are intirely design'd for Practice; for nothing can be more ridiculous than to imagine, that Christ hath drawn up such admirable Rules of Life only to shew his own Wisdom, without intending to oblige us to do accordingly. And if he does indispensibly require our Observance of them, as most certainly he does, and as we have shewn but now; we may be sure there is good Reason for it. And

And the Reason is this ; because the Happiness which he came to purchase for us is such, that unless we fit and prepare our selves by the Methods he hath taught us, we can never be capable of its Enjoyment. For how can an *impure, vile, wicked Wretch*, as such ever come to *Heaven*, and enjoy the Bliss of that Holy Place ? But we are all of us by Nature, since the Fall, such *impure vile Wretches* ; and therefore 'tis necessary we should be wash'd, and cleans'd, and purify'd, and *made meet to be Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light*.

'Tis true, (and for ever blessed be the infinite Mercy of God for it) whatever might have been imputed to us, or we were liable to, upon Account of the Sin of our first Parents, is done away by the Blood of our crucify'd Saviour, and the Waters of Baptism ; whereby, tho' we were *born in Sin, and the Children of Wrath, we are made the Children of Grace* : But notwithstanding this, so strangely prone are we to Evil, since their Fall, and so averse to what is Holy and Good, that nothing is more needful than good Laws, bound upon us with the strongest Sanctions, to keep us from utterly forfeiting God's Favour again ; and to train us up for that Happiness, which the Divine Goodness

Goodness has design'd for us through Christ. And therefore it is that our blessed Redeemer hath given us such Excellent Rules of Life, and so strictly commanded us to observe them, and promis'd us Eternal Glory with himself and his Heavenly Father if we do, and threatned us with an Everlasting Banishment from him in Hell if we do not : And after all, can prevail with but few, to take the course to be happy.

Such then being the Nature of the Duties of the Gospel, and such the Reason of their being so peremptorily injoyn'd, and so much depending upon our sincere Performance of them, and to which we are so strangely backward and averse ; as 'tis very *needful* seriously and often to consider these things, so 'tis a great Argument of our *Wisdom* so to do, and to act agreeably. And with the wise Builder here, to prepare against a time of Storms and Tempests ; and look forward to that terrible Day, which is coming on apace, and will try the Strength and Solidity of our Building to the utmost, and shew what kind of Foundation it was rais'd upon, and ruine both that and us, if it stands not very *firm*. For God *has appointed a Day in which he will judge the World in impartial Righteousness* ; when every Man's

Work shall be try'd, and we shall all be call'd to give an Account of our past Lives before one that is infinitely Holy and Just, and from whom nothing can be conceal'd, no not the most secret Thoughts and Intentions of our Hearts, and who will reward every one according to his Deservings. And this great Judge is that very Jesus, who has so expressly told us, that sincere Obedience to his Commands, is that which must bring us off at that Day; and without which, his Father's Wrath, like an impetuous Torrent, will then overwhelm us, and irresistibly drive us down with all our vain Pretences, and groundless Expectations, into the Burning Lake prepar'd for the Devil and his Angels.

In that Day, says Christ, immediately before this Parable, I will profess to all the Workers of Iniquity, Depart from me, I never knew you. Therefore, as he begins this Parable, lest you should be deceiv'd into any Hopes of my Favour then, without being obedient to my Commands now; Therefore whosoever heareth my Sayings, and doeth them, I will liken to a wise Man that built his House upon a Rock, &c.

'Tis very plain then, that 'tis utterly in vain to hope for Heaven upon any other Terms than sincere Evangelical Obedience ;

ence; and that the most confident Faith will never save us if destitute of good Works; *Jam. 2. 24.*

Christ indeed, is the only Rock of our Salvation, and his Merits the only sure ground of our Hopes; and Faith in him, and a steady unshaken Belief of our Pardon and Acceptance with God through his Intercession, and in Vertue of his All-sufficient Sacrifice, is the Foundation we are to lay upon this Rock, and the deeper 'tis laid the better, *Luke 6. 48.* But then, it must be such a Faith as *Christ* requires; (*i. e.*) a Faith that is obediential and operative: Not such a barren notional Faith as wicked Men, and even the Devils themselves may have, for that will be to as little purpose as none; but a Faith that influences the Heart and Affections, and makes us entirely devote and dedicate ourselves to our Redeemer's Service, and with a chearful Readiness do our best endeavour to perform what he has made our Duty.

If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them, and if ye love me keep my Commandments, says our Lord, *John 13. 17. & 14. 15.* And *St. James* says, that *Faith without Works is dead,* *Jam. 2. 17.* And *St. Paul* makes it a Motive to Deeds of Charity, and to be rich in good Works,

that thereby we shall *secure to our selves a good Foundation against the time to come, that we may attain Eternal Life,* 1 Tim. 6.

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And accordingly at the Day of Judgment we shall be try'd and rewarded, not according to our *Faith* only, but according to our *Works*; *Come ye Blessed, &c. for I was hungry and ye gave me Meat, &c. Depart ye Cursed, &c. for I was hungry and ye gave me no Meat, &c.* So that a true Gospel Faith, and the Works of a Gospel Righteousness are inseparable; and both together make up the only sure Foundation for a Christian to build his Hopes upon of Eternal Life.

And this is the true Notion of *Edification* in Scripture, or as St. Jude expresses it, *Building up our selves in our most holy Faith,* Jude 20. 'Tis not the filling our Heads with unprofitable Notions, and pleasing our *itching Ears, with heaping to our selves Variety of Teachers,* and pretending to be mightily mov'd and affected by them, as a sort of People did whom St. Paul mentions, 1 Tim. 4. 3, 4. *who yet could not endure sound Doctrine, but turn'd away their Ears from the Truth:* But 'tis to grow in Grace, to shew out of a good Conversation our Works with Meekness of Wisdom, Jam. 3. 13. *To give all diligence,* as St. Peter adviseth,

adviseeth, 2 Pet. I. 5, &c to add to our Faith Vertue, to Vertue Knowledge, to Knowledge Temperance, to Temperance Patience, to Patience Brotherly Kindness, and to Brotherly Kindness Charity; for if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the Knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things, whatever Illuminations he may pretend to, is blind and cannot see far off, is destitute of saving Knowledge, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old Sins by Baptism, and then engag'd to lead a new Life for the future. Wherefore the rather Brethren give diligence, by this means, to make your Calling and Election sure, for this is the only way of doing it effectually; and if ye do these things ye shall never fall. For so an Entrance shall be ministred unto you abundantly, into the Everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

This is true Christian Edification; and you see 'tis well founded, and so are the Hopes that are rais'd upon it. 'Tis Christian Practice that must build us up into a Holy Temple for the Spirit of God, and prove the Sincerity of our Faith, and procure us Mercy at the Day of Judgment, and Admission into Heaven. And yet, which is very strange, there are a great

many who pretend to *edify* most by those Teachers, who say least of the necessity of Obedience and good Works in order to our Salvation; and withdraw from and give ill Names to those who urge this great Truth home upon them, as becomes all Faithful Ministers of Christ to do.

But 'tis a very ill sign when People (with those *St. Paul* speaks of mention'd before) can't bear *sound Doctrine*; and are most fond of those that *speak unto them smooth things*, and make the Way to Heaven easier than our Lord has made it: And 'twill prove a very fatal Delusion at last.

Our Saviour says most expressly here in this Parable, that he only is *wise* unto Salvation, who *does* as well as *bears* his Sayings: And that whoever hears, but doth them not, and builds his Hopes of future Happiness upon a dead unactive Faith in him, and bare Knowledge of his Will without suitable Obedience, shall find at length that he has built without a Foundation, and his vain Expectation shall come to nothing, as that foolish Man's House did which he built upon the *Sand*.

And since our Saviour hath said so, we dare not but say so too; and should we say otherwise, we should basely betray
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our Trust, and deceive you into Ruine, and have a sad Account to make at the Day of Judgment. And therefore, we must again and again, urge you not to be unprofitable *Hearers but doers of the Word, deceiving your own selves*, Jam. 1. 22. for whoever *knows his Lord's Will, and does it not*, instead of receiving a Reward for some fine Words and fawning Pretences which he may have bestow'd upon him, shall only be *beaten with the more Stripes*. And as nothing can be more foolish than for a Man to be very busy, and take a great deal of pains in building a House upon the Sand without a Foundation, and please himself with vain Hopes of Security and Shelter in it, when the next hasty Rain, or Storm of Wind, or Flood, will tumble it down again upon his Head; so there is equal Folly and Danger, in depending upon that sort of Religion for Happiness, which consists only in an empty Profession of Christianity, without a sincere Conformity to its Holy Rules of Life.

II. And this is the next thing to be consider'd in this Parable, *Every one that heareth these Sayings of mine and doth them not, shall be likened to a foolish Man that built his House upon the Sand, &c.*

And indeed, one would wonder what any Man can propose to himself from constantly hearing of his Duty, but concerning himself very little about putting it in Practice.

For if it be his *Duty*, his being inform'd in it, is only in order to his Performance of it ; and when he hears himself often and affectionately urg'd to pay Obedience to it, and reprov'd for his neglects of it, and encourag'd by the inestimable Promises of the Gospel to observe it better for the future, and threatened with the dreadfulest Punishments if he does not, and all this by those who act in his Saviour's Name, and are by him commission'd so to do : For a Man to have all this constantly ringing in his Ears, and pretend that he believes it all to be very true, and yet to be very little if at all influenc'd by it, is strangely unaccountable. But it is much more so, for a Man to build his Hopes of Salvation upon such Christianity as this. For this is to hope against the Nature of that Salvation, and the whole Tenor of the Gospel ; against all the Promises and Threatnings of it, against our Lord's own express Words over and over again repeated ; and against the very End and Design of his coming into the World :
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Which was to *redeem us from all Iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar People; zealous of good Works.*

A Man of any Sense, or indeed of any *Modesty*, could never hope at such an extravagant rate as this; and one would think should be very uneasy to be so frequently told of that Duty which he takes so little Care to practice, and yet is convinc'd *is* his Duty, and no more than is highly reasonable, and will be of most happy Consequence to him both in this World and for ever, if it be done, and of the contrary if it be not. He that is not very stupid and thoughtless, and withal (which usually go together) utterly without Shame, can never bear to hear so much said to him of this Nature, without endeavouring to be the better for it: Much less can he persist in his confident groundless Hopes of being *Preach'd* into Heaven, without setting one foot forward in that way, which those very Sermons tell him does alone lead to it.

This is the most obstinate hardened Folly in the World, and must needs have a very terrible Conclusion. A House thus foolishly built upon the Sand, can never stand the Shock of Storms and Tempests, but will quickly fall, and *great will be the*

the Fall of it. * Nothing can support such a Christian in the Day of Vengeance but a Miracle, and that the greatest that ever was ; even God's falsifying his Word, and acting quite contrary to his own Nature, and all the Revelations that he has ever yet made to the World.

But can any Christian be so besotted as to think, that all God's Threatnings, and what is said of the Day of Judgment, and the impartial Proceedings of it, and the dreadful and irreverfible Sentence that fhall then be pafs'd upon the wicked ; that all this is but a Bugbear to affright timorous Minds ? A Contrivance to keep Men in fome Awe, but fhall never really be ? Is our moft Holy Religion nothing but a *Romance* ; handsomely put together, but with little Ground of Truth ? A thing to furnifh Matter for Difcourfe, or an Amufement to employ our Thoughts for an Hour or two, but not defign'd for a Rule of Life and Manners ? No Christian, one would think, could ever entertain fuch Thoughts of it, and foother himfelf up with fuch wild Fancies as thefe ; and yet there are Abundance whofe Practice befpeaks no other than fuch a Faith as this.

But if we indeed believe that Creed which we fo often repeat, particularly
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the two last Articles of it, *the Resurrection of the Body*, both of the Just and Unjust, in order to their Tryal by the Holy Jesus, according to their Works done in their first Life, whether they have been Good or Evil; *and the Life Everlasting*, in endless and unspeakable Happiness, or Misery, according to their several Deservings here: If 'tis indeed our Belief, *that this Day of the Lord will come as a Thief in the Night, in the which the Heavens shall pass away with a great Noise, and the Elements shall melt with fervent Heat, and the Earth also, and the Works that are therein shall be burnt up; if we really look for such dreadful things as these, what manner of Persons ought we to be in all manner of Holy Conversation and Godliness! And how diligent to prepare for this his coming, that we may be found of him in Peace, without spot and blameless! 2 Pet. 3. 10, &c.*

He that does thus will be a Wise Builder indeed, and stand firm and unshaken upon a Foundation that will never deceive him. *Si fractus Illabatur Orbis, Impavidum ferient Ruinae.* Amidst all the Terrors of a burning sinking World the Testimony of a good Conscience will bear him up, in good Hope of the Judge's Favour, and in joyful Expectation of the

the Blessed Sentence, *Well done good and faithful Servant, enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord ; Come ye Blessed Children of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the World.*

But what a dismal Condition will that wretched Creature be in, who has all along lead an idle thoughtless Life ; and only talk'd a little of Religion, and at most been an unprofitable Hearer, but no Doer of the Word : And so has built his Hopes of Salvation upon the *Sand*, which will presently give way when it comes to the great Tryal, and deceive him into *Eternal Ruine !* (O Dreadful Words !) which God of his Mercy prevent !

But 'tis not only the careless lazy sort of Christians that are such unhappy foolish Builders, but some that make a great Bustle, and take a great deal of Pains ; but yet to as little Purpose, for want of laying a good Foundation at bottom.

I mean those, who are very constant, and exact, in the outward parts of Religion, the *Instrumental* Duties of it, but want the inward Spirit and Life of it ; or as the Apostle expresses it, have the *Form*, but not the *Power* of Godliness.

Such

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Such were the Pharisees of old, who were great Frequenters of the Publick Service in the Temple, and nice Observers of the Ceremonial part of the Law; they pray'd and fasted often, paid their Tithes exactly, even of the most minute things, *Mint, Annise, and Commin*; took great Care of not breaking the Sacred Rest of the Sabbath, and in every outward Performance were irreprovable: And upon this they valued themselves much, and made a great Noise with it; but all the while took little or no notice of the *weightier* Matters of the Law, and therefore were branded by our Lord with the Hateful Name of Hypocrites, and reprov'd with the greatest Sharpness.

And too much like them are some in the Christian Church, and that of all Denominations, who are mighty zealous for their several ways of Worship, appear constantly in their Publick Religious Assemblies, are very regular in their Behaviour there, and in all Respects, as to what relates to an outward Shew of Religion, seem to have a great Sense of it upon their Minds: When all the while they are very great Strangers to what is Religion indeed; and both their Temper, and their Conversation, are very far from Christian. And yet upon
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such outward Performances do they build their Hopes of future Happiness ; *there* they set up their Rest, and look no further.

Now, tho' these things indeed ought to be done, as our Saviour said to the Pharisees, and Decency and Regularity looks no where better than in Religion ; yet 'tis in order to what is of infinitely greater Importance, and which, if we hope to be sav'd, must not be left undone. 'Tis the inward Disposition of the Heart that God chiefly regards ; and which, if it be *right*, will influence all our Actions : And therefore, if we have so heard the Sermons of the Gospel, and made that good Use of our Attendance upon Publick Ordinances, as to be *renewed in the Spirit of our Minds*, and to walk as Christ walk'd in all our Conversation, sincerely tho' imperfectly, and according to the Holy Rules he hath given us, to the best of our Power ; then we may have good Hope towards God, and our Expectation shall not be cut off. But if we have spent all our Time and Care about the Externals of Religion, and are very little the better for it in our Souls, and shew no Fruits of it in our Lives : Tho' we may have taken a great deal of Pains in raising a
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fine appearance of Christianity, which shall look very well to the Eye, and with which we our selves as well as others, 'tis like, may be mightily pleas'd at present ; yet we do but deceive our selves all the while, and have labour'd to no purpose, and shall at last find we have done so by a sad Experience, because there wants a Foundation of real solid Holiness, without which all will signify nothing at the last great Day.

Now if all this be true, and those that live the best Lives are the best and the wisest Christians, we may plainly see from hence the great Vanity of Mens valuing themselves upon being of this or that *Perswasion*, how Orthodox soever it may be, without taking care to lead a Holy and Unblamable Life. For let our Notions and Opinions be never so unexceptionable, they will do us no real Service, unless sanctify'd by a truly pious Conversation ; and will be in great Danger too of being quickly corrupted, if our Lives are led in direct Opposition to our Faith. According to that of St. Paul, *Holding Faith and a good Conscience, which some having put away, concerning Faith have made shipwreck,* 1 Tim. I. 19.

Error in Notion is but too often the Consequence of Debauchery of Manners ; and a Man that cares not how he lives, will

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in a short time care as little what he believes; nay make it his Business to corrupt his Belief, that he may find out some Excuses and Palliations for his wicked Life.

He therefore that would avoid pernicious Errors in the *Doctrinals* of Religion, must carefully conform his Practice to the *Duties* of it; and first endeavour to tread in the Steps of his great Master's Life, if he would have his Mind enlightned with his Heavenly Truth. And 'tis no ill Rule of judging of Mens Pretences to extraordinary Light and Inspiration; first to look into their Manners, and the Tendency of their Doctrines to good Life. And agreeably when our Lord bids us *beware of false Prophets*, he tells us, *by their Fruits ye shall know them*, Mat. 7. 15, 16.

But further, if from this Parable, and what has been said upon it, it appears that a good Life is the very Soul of Christian Religion, and without which, let a Man believe and profess what he will, his Hopes of Salvation will have a very sandy and deceitful Foundation; what strange Divinity is that which is so much cry'd up by some among us, that *Faith* is all in all, and that to Preach up good Works smells very rank of Popery! 'Tis very strange that these extraordinarily enlightened Persons, as they would

would pretend to be, should run thus counter to the *main Design* of Christianity; and make it their great Business to divorce and put asunder, what our great Master has thus inseparably join'd together.

For a Christian to disparage good Works; how odly does it look! For People that pretend to more Holiness than ordinary, to find fault with a Church, because it makes it its chief Care to urge the indispensable Necessity of Holiness of Life; what a Contradiction is it! But it seems, according to this Divinity, the best Christians are those who have least regard to good Works, and those God's choicest Jewels, to whom Piety of Life is not look'd upon as necessary to their Salvation.

And indeed, to those that know these sort of People best, 'tis evident from Experience, that the main of their Religion consists in great Confidences in God's peculiar Love and Favour to them, and presumptuous enrolling themselves in the Book of Life, and uncharitably excluding almost every Body else; but as for *good Works*, there is as little of that sort of Christianity to be found
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amongst them, as with any that pretend to be Disciples of Christ Jesus. And in this they act but according to their Principles; as we shew'd before. But, sad Principles are those, which lead Men to such Practices; and I pray God keep us all from being infected with them.

And since we of the Church of *England*, are instructed in much truer Notions of Christianity; and are taught, what the Scriptures plainly assert, that *without no Holiness no Man shall see the Lord*, that *Faith alone cannot save, but without good Works is dead*, and the like; Since these are the Principles of the Church of *England*, let us all be true to these *our* Principles, and act according to them. Let it no more be said of us that our Lives run counter to our Doctrine, and that careless Libertinism is all the Effect they can discern of the numerous Discourses we hear about the Necessity of good Life.

Indeed, it is a Shame we should give so much occasion, as too many of us do, to have such things laid to our Charge; and one would think, a Man of a generous Spirit should not en-

endure to expose himself thus to the Lash of ill Tongues, and do irreparable Damage and Dishonour to what he believes to be the true Religion.

An unblameable Conversation, when all's done, will be the most unanswerable Argument for the Truth of our Holy Religion, against the Opposition of Atheists, and Infidels, and Scepticks, and Schismatics, and all its Enemies of whatever Denomination; and without which, all other Arguments, however convincing in themselves, will very much lose their Force.

If then, we sincerely believe and love our Religion, and desire that it should grow and increase; let us take that Course which of all other is the most likely to make it do so. That is, let us amend our Lives, and conform our Manners to that Holy Rule which our Blessed Saviour hath set us, and which the Church of England so earnestly recommends to our Observance; and then, we may defy all other Objections that can be made against us.

Wherefore, to conclude this Parable; (and which I have placed *last*, as a good

Conclusion to all the rest) since our ever Blessed Redeemer, who is *the Way, the Truth, and the Life*, and hath told us, that *no Man can come to the Father but by him*, hath in great Mercy plainly mark'd out to us the Way that leads to Eternal Glory, and commanded us carefully to walk in it, and forewarn'd us of the Danger of turning from it, and cutting out new Ways to our selves, which will bring us to Destruction: Let us be so wise, as heedfully to follow his Guidance and Direction, tho' we find the Way narrow and difficult, that at last we may enter into that strait Gate, which leads to Life everlasting. Reflecting often upon this Parable of the *Wise and Foolish Builder*, and upon those Words of our Lord, *Matt. 5. 19. Whosoever shall break one of the least of these Commandments, and shall teach Men so, shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven: but whosoever shall do, and teach them* (and nothing so instructive and perswasive as Example) *the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.* And devoutly begging his Grace and Assistance from whom is all our Sufficiency; and who has promis'd to give to those that ask, *Mat. 7. 7. and to open to those that knock, and that those who seek shall find.*

The

The PRAYER.

AND thou, most Holy Jesus! Have Mercy upon me miserable Sinner! Who have so long been thy Disciple, and constantly instructed in thy Blessed Will, and yet have made such small Proficiency in the School of Righteousness! How often have I read thy Divine Sermon on the Mount, and other thy most Excellent Discourses; and had the Duties they contain earnestly urg'd upon my Practice by thy Ministers, to gether with the happy Consequence of Obedience, and the dreadful end of the contrary: And yet, my Life hath been as if thy Laws were only to be read and talk'd of, not obey'd; and all the while I have had the strange Confidence to hope for Heaven at last!

O rouse me powerfully from this Fatal Negligence and stupid Presumption! That I may no longer build my Hopes of Happiness Eternal, upon so Sandy, Treacherous a Foundation; but immediately apply my self with all possible Sincerity and Diligence, to practice every Holy Lesson thou hast taught me, and pay thee a Chearful, Uniform Obedience!

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But who is sufficient for such a Task as this, without thy Aid! Who can bend his stubborn Will, and square his crooked Life, by such a perfect Rule, as thou hast given us; unless thou help his Infirmities, strengthen his Weakness, and work in him both to will and to do, according to thy Good Pleasure!

O therefore, most Gracious Lord, leave me not to my impotent self; but be assisting to me in the Performance of every part of my Duty: That so my Hearty Endeavours may at last be crown'd with Success!

So shall I have good ground to hope, to see thee smile upon me at the Day of Judgment, and having fought the good Fight, through thy Merits and Mercies receive that Crown of Righteousness, which thou, the Righteous Judge wilt then give to all that love thy appearing, and prepare for it by a sincerely Pious and Religious Life.

Amen; Blessed and most Holy Saviour,
Amen!



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